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THE THREE RESURRECTIONS AND THE TRIUMPH OF MAEVE

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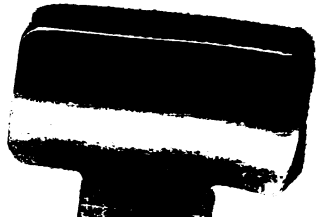

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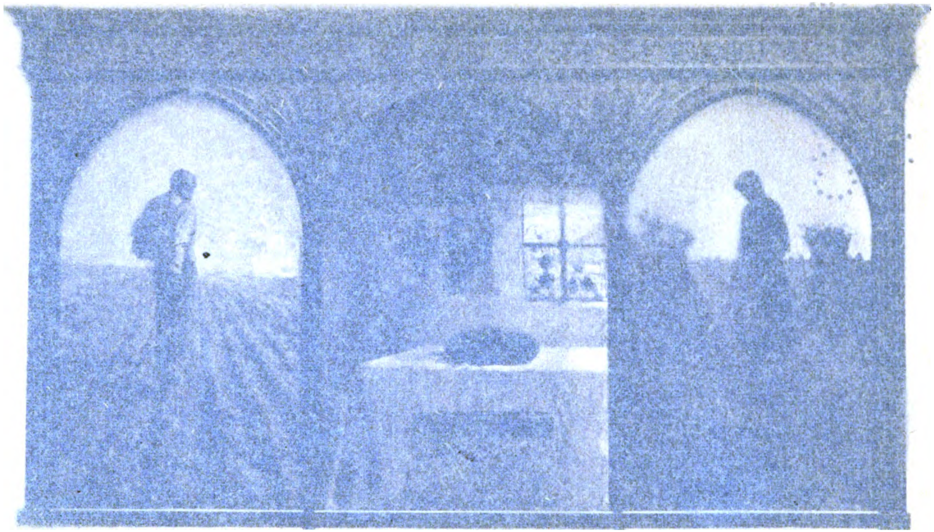

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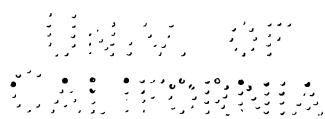
The Three Resurrections

AND

The Triumph of Maeve

BY

EVA GORE-BOOTH



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MAIN

The three magic powers are Imagination, Will, and Love.

PARACELSUS.

"*Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory.*"

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THE THREE RESURRECTIONS

I

LAZARUS

Like driven cattle groping in blind herds
The hours passed me by, I stood alone,
And human dreams and light-winged prayers
and words
Singed their frail wings about a flame-built
throne.

Lost among outward things the poor limbs
lay,
Holding no hint of the fled fire divine,

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Like painted towers that crumble and decay,
When the God vanishes from some fair
shrine.

Then from the broken edge and granite sheer
Of this harsh world, unto her heart of flame
A cry rang inwards, through the secret
sphere,
Till the soul trembled at the body's name.

A wild wind sweeping through the fortressed
gate
Of fire precipitous, in storms of will,
Did through the fibres of my soul vibrate,
And shook the Lilies on the Holy Hill.

Down in the deep abyss the deep voice
sighed,
The pitiless voice that rhythmic tides obey,

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Did through the inner courts in whispers
glide,
And thrust my soul forth on her lonely way.

Yea, with strange fires down to the crumbling
soil,
Amid the shambling herd of days and hours,
Drove the poor soul back to her patient toil,
And bid the slave rebuild her broken towers.

Oh Mary, dreamer without ruth or fear,
Brave through the radiant aether to descend
Into the holiest inner deeps austere,
Was this well done of Him who was thy
friend?

Lo, when amid past homely hours serene,
One called to thee for service, thou didst
stand

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Silent, thine eyes fixed on the Light Unseen,
And the bread broken in thine idle hand.

Did then His voice call back to outward things
The radiant spirit wandering afar ?
He bade us not to break the wild bird's wings
With heavy loads, nor wreck our sister's star.

Now does He break Himself the wing that flies
Too far, and quench the starlight on the wind,
Yea, the lost light still dazzles my sad eyes,
And the lost silence haunts my fevered mind.

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How shall I thank Him? With but little
zest
I grind the corn of Life in His dark mill,
Close to the hard heart of the Manifest,
I grope through days and hours that are His
Will.

Ah, Love can drag the soul down from the
spheres,
And bind her to the heart of human things,
And turn her high resolves to sighs and
tears,
And break her wings, alas, and break her
wings.

Still it may be hid treasure on the earth
Shall make this life of shadows worth its
cost

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Of dust and dreariness and death and birth
And broken wings and blue-lit radiance lost.

And though my soul athwart the great white way
Uncrowned, mysterious, weeping, starry-eyed,
Flared down into her humble house of clay,
Lonely amongst dim meadows to abide,

Yet strange it is that He whose voice rang through
The austere deeps found fire in clay concealed,
Found in the false the likeness of the true,
And His own inner will in each green field.

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This thought of all the thoughts that flash
and blaze,
Lightens the kingdom of my shadowy trust,
He knew the wisdom of the secret rays
Who drew my soul back to the alien dust.

This is the fixed heart of each changing
dream,
The inner light that burns but for the
blind—
The gold that lies beneath the flowing
stream—
The buried treasure of a lonely mind.

Now He is dead, and no man understands
The mystery folded round each living heart,
What gulfs of mystic seas and unknown lands
Hold every man from his own soul apart.

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But He dwelt ever on that desolate verge,
Amid the roar of winds and whirling tides,
And in His soul the moaning of the surge
And broken waters of the world abides.

His hidden thought was veiled by too much
light ;
Yet even when He wept I understood
That the stars shine on many a moonless
night,
And bright streams glitter through the
pathless wood.

Each crazy hut, all walls of mud or clay
Can hold the Eternal Beauty's light Divine.
This kingdom fails not, passes not away. . . .
He said so, who was Mary's friend and mine.

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II

THE RETURN OF ALCESTIS

When wise Alcestis, risen from the grave,
Stood by Admetos for whose sake she died,
Her eyes were fierce that once were only brave
And her heart hard with an unearthly pride.

Admetos, the pale King who feared to die,
Feared the dead risen, shrank from the proud Queen,
Her white cheeks flushed with fading ecstasy,
Bright with the radiant breath of the Unseen.

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He knew she saw straight through the kingly
guise,
Into his soul's poor garret starved and grim,
Behind the threatening brow and flashing
eyes,
Discerned the secret coward soul of him.

'Fear not, Admetos, the long road'—she
said—
'Led me through wind and fire, made pure
by these,
I bring no deadly vapours from the dead,
No dreadful grave dust clings about my
knees.

'How shouldst thou, hearing but the last
harsh sigh
Of the poor noisy flesh, dream of the smile,

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Of the unheard, invisible ecstasy,
Lo, I have lived in light a little while ! '

Then did Admetos praise her with soft phrase
And Love's dear silences, but she stood cold,
And slowly the fire died from her white gaze,
And her pale lips, once sweet, grew stern and old.

The King raved, 'Thou whose stony eyes austere,
Lay humbled in the dust that I might live,
Hast thou no love for him once held so dear ?'
And naught she answered save 'O King, forgive ! '

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Men brought her children to her, with cold
hands
She touched their hair and left them,
murmuring
'No prince or priest or peasant under-
stands
That this our life is but a shadowy thing.'

At last Admetos tired of his dull bride
And went back to his comrades and his
wine,
Whilst the cold silent Queen throned at his
side,
Dreamed of the Vision and the light divine.

The coward King had but another dread,
A white-faced phantom stood beside his
throne ;

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But sad Alcestis, risen from the dead,
Faced this dark world and her own soul alone.

And Heracles, whose death-defeating sword
Had saved her, looking in her starving eyes,
Knew he had robbed her of that just reward
That crowns the desolate courage of the Wise.

The freed bird comes not for her own delight,
Back to the narrow cage and prison bars,
Lo, the wide air scarce held her far-flung flight
What time her will was throned beyond the stars.

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III

PSYCHE IN HADES

When Psyche staggered through the darkness dense,
And stood in Hades, still she feared to taste
The feast of the dark gods of clay and sense,
But ate dry bread with tears and fled in haste.

Yet did she bear a gift from Proserpine
To Aphrodite in the spheres of light,
A casket holding the lost dream divine,
The perilous beauty of the Infinite.

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As forth she journeyed on her homeward
way
The Unseen Light lay clasped against her
breast,
And through the darkness piercing ray on
ray
Troubled the deeps of the Unmanifest.

Yea, down among the earth's uncared-for
things
Rushed forth a sense of greatness unfulfilled,
Till in the darkness secret faëry wings
Deep in the grub's dim being stirred and
thrilled.

And daffodils, whose petals of pale gold
Lie folded round the bulb's heart, buried
deep,

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Seemed in the darkness softly to unfold
As if the sun were shining through their sleep.

Then Psyche journeyed o'er the dangerous hills
And read the secret of forbidden streams,
And gazed into the hearts of daffodils,
And knew life's treasure-house of buried dreams.

Yet some men say the casket of white brass
She brought from Hades with such loving care
Held only the long sleep of flowers and grass,
And silences of dumb things everywhere.

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She heeds them not, who knows the hidden
worth
Of day and night and twilight, flower and
weed,
The strong white roots that shake the
crumbling earth
And frail wings of the sycamore seed.

Again she wanders through this world not
ours,
Far from the unseen beauty, prison bound,
She seeks to steal the radiance of the flowers,
To ravish the ground's secret from the
ground.

She knows no idle dream of fair and foul,
With the same rapturous breath she tells the
tale

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Of the high soaring lark or the brown owl,
The corncrake or the urgent nightingale.

For her the sea thrift from her rocky ledge
Blazons the secret of the passing storm,
And briony leaves carve out in the green hedge
The decorate delight of sculptured form.

Her will the universal will allows,
The snake's dark poison, yea, and the wasp's sting,
She has no special favour for May boughs,
Nor craves long life for the frail painted wing.

And we in this dull house of tears and clay
Seek but her treasure, labouring everyone

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To take the starlight with us on our way
Or steal some fire of beauty from the sun,

Till, in the darkness, banished Proserpine
Flashes her fierce torch in our shrinking eyes,
And thrusts into our hands the gift divine,
The magic treasure casket of the Wise.

Thus, when we pass again the long-closed door
That leads unto the Real, we bear afar
The will of seaweed on the barren shore,
The thought that holds in heaven star on star.

The riches of new powers accumulate
Have made of dying herdsmen gods and kings,

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Life takes with both hands all the gifts of fate,
Till each poor soul grows worthy of her wings.

Oh, whiteness of the dawn and sacred fire,
The folded strength of the light sycamore seed,
And the hid rose's heart in the wild brier,
Are all the incarnate spirit's utter need.

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The torn fibres of the soul are the price of Wisdom.

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THE UNKNOWN GOOD

All dreams seem but a bunch of withered
flowers
Beside the living joy from anguish rent;
We wrestle with the world's embattled
powers
To mould the outline of the fair event.

With labour each great deed is hammered
out,
On every battle-field the dead are strown,
Fair truth is carven out of anguished doubt,
The builder's heart lies crushed beneath the
stone.

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The price of every joy the soul may gain
Is paid in blood and sighing and sharp tears,
Who is a miser of the hoard of pain,
Shall win no great good from the crafty
years.

Because the Ferry-man still takes his toll
Of fear and agony and sobbing breath,
Because of the torn fibres of the soul,
I know there is a great good gained by
death.

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POVERTY

One swallow dared not trust the idle dream
That called her South through fading skies
and gray,
One spirit feared to follow the wild gleam
That drives the soul forth on her starlit way.

As the starved swallow on the frozen wold
Lies dying, with her swift wings stiff and
furled,
So does the soul grow colder and more cold,
In the dark winter of this starless world.

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Poorer than slaves of any vain ideal,
These are the saddest of all living things—
Souls that have dreamed the Unseen Light
unreal,
And birds without the courage of their
wings.

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THE PERILOUS LIGHT

The Eternal Beauty smiled at me
From the long lily's curvèd form,
She laughed in a wave of the sea,
She flashed on white wings through the storm.

In the bulb of a daffodil
She made a little joyful stir,
And the white cabin on the hill
Was my heart's home because of her.

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Her laughter fled the eyes of pride,
Barefoot she went o'er stony land,
And ragged children hungry eyed
Clung to her skirts and held her hand.

When storm winds shook the cabin door
And red the Atlantic sunset blazed,
The fisher folk of Mullaghmore
Into her eyes indifferent gazed.

By lonely waves she dwells apart,
And seagulls circling on white wings
Crowd round the windows of her heart,
Most dear to her of starving things.

The ploughman down by Knocknarea
Was free of her twilight abode ;
In shining sea winds salt with spray,
She haunted every gray cross road.

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Some peasants with a creel of turf
Along the windswept boreen came,
Her feet went flashing through the surf,
Her wings were in the sunset's flame.

Beyond the rocks of Classiebawn
The mackerel fishers sailing far
Out in the vast Atlantic dawn
Found, tangled in their nets, a star.

In every spent and broken wave
The Eternal Beauty takes her rest,
She is the Lover of the Brave,
The comrade of the perilous quest.

The Eternal Beauty wrung my heart,
Faithful is she, and true to shed
The austere glory of Art
On the scarceness of daily bread.

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Men follow her with toil and thought
Over the heavens' starry pride,
The Eternal Beauty comes unsought
To the child by the roadside.

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NARCISSUS

I GAZE at my own form from morn till
night,
Reflected in the stream, thus do I find
Great wisdom in flung curves of wind-blown
light,
And am the jest and scorn of all mankind.

The ploughman bending over the dark soil
Dreams himself free and every flower his
slave,
Well may he, pausing in his useful toil,
Frown at the thought of such an idle knave.

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The shepherd labouring o'er the cloudy
height,
The warrior storming the high fortressed
hill,
Dream not at all of the Diviner Light,
Or the clear waters of the lonely Will.

The King who rules our lives with flame and
sword
Sees not his own face mirrored in the tide,
He knows that every warrior calls him Lord,
And scorns to linger at the river-side.

All these have many deeds, here the dark firs
Dream on the edge of silence, mirrored
green,
Deep in the river's magic chrystal stirs
The image of the Seen and the Unseen.

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Down in the river's heart strange broken
dreams
Float luminous and tremble and recede,
And the lost torch of vanished wisdom
gleams,
Caught in the green net of the water weed.

I gaze into my own eyes, finding there
The silver flame of Beauty's austere powers,
The sunlight dazzles me from my own hair,
My face is but a flower among the flowers.

Behold each shining curl, in watery curves,
Presses the circle of all living things
To my dull heart; the current breaks and
swerves,
And back to heaven the drowning starlight
flings.

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THE HARVEST OF SILENCE

Gay is the call of the Sower going forth in
the morning refreshed from sleep,
Glad is the song of the Reaper coming home
in the evening laden with sheaves,
But in silence the lonely plough the fields,
and sow, and the patient labourers reap,
And in silence the Reaper comes home empty-
handed on desolate rain-soaked eves.

Beyond the clang of immortal verse, and the
prayers of men and whispers divine,
In the Holy of Holies, where lights burned
dim, and only the Wise Ones might go,

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Corn reaped in silence by silent Reapers lay
shrined in the innermost shrine,
Whilst outside in the darkness the priestess
fell tranced, and the god paced to and fro.

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ECSTASY

God holds the soul attracted to Him by its roots.—
PLATO.

He who seeks God has yet no need of wings,
Down in the deeps of being a dim road
Leads through the soul unto the roots of things,
And that abyss that is the gods' abode.

There in the elemental caves of night,
And dim recesses of unconscious mind,
The Wise Men's star burns with a steady light,
And a faint whisper lingers on the wind.

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THE HUMAN ADVENTURE

On these wave-haunted sands the children play,
And silver twilight, clad in radiant gleams,
Comes laughing down the hill from Knocknarea,
With a gay company of wandering dreams.

The while a dog in careless ecstasy,
Trusting the guidance of a human hand,
Plunges forth headlong into the wild sea,
Brings but a stick and courage back to land.

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So in the incarnation of the Wise
At times it seems a light and foolish whim
To brave the abyss for such a doubtful prize,
Plunged in wild waters of the twilight dim.

Yea, the tired spirit struggling with the tide
Of flowing life and monstrous waves of time,
Clutches but feebly her immortal pride,
And clings unto a broken bough of rhyme.

When the strong swimmer rescued from the
wave,
Deep in the sunlit grass enraptured lies,
May she hold fast the secret of the grave,
The light of Peril in her dauntless eyes.

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At twilight the room is full of the shadows of great waves.

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TRAGEDY

The radiance of heaven diffused all about me lifted up my soul to its own contemplation.—THE EMPEROR JULIAN.

THE soul dwells in the body as sunshine
Dwells in the air, wide, radiant, intense,
Drowned in untroubled blue the Light Divine
Would make transparent all the walls of sense.

Across the blue a ragged cloudlet sails,
A little wandering shadow delicate
Vails the sun's face, the supreme glory vails,
So small a cloud can hide a light so great.

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A DWELLER BY THE OCEAN

Oh very near the wide Atlantic shore
Is my white cottage homestead dark and low,
No idle neighbours stand about the door,
But great waves storming past the window go.

At times I dream the Atlantic infinite
Watching the sun rise over fields of foam,
And smile to think those floods of gracious light
Flow round the darkness of my narrow home.

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When light fades from the green-lit fields of surf,
Wave shadows flicker on the white-washed wall,
I stir to flame the smouldering heap of turf,
And dream of greatness in my cottage small.

Then the wind moans athwart the unquiet sea,
Thin streaks of white across the ocean creep,
And, in my soul, forgotten ecstasy
Stirs restlessly and shudders in her sleep.

But when the bitter storm wind lifts and shakes
My little cottage, least of fragile things,
Out of the deeps of memory awakes
The soul's voice weeping o'er her broken wings.

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Again the lost divine procession fair
Crosses the humble threshold of my mind ;
A rush of wings makes pure the evening air,
And the dark hour gives sight unto the blind.

Then is the vail of woven fancy rent,
Into the eyes of truth again I gaze,
And read the doom of the long banishment,
My soul shrinks backward from the lightning's blaze.

Not pure enough for vision, and not just
Enough for justice, yet too pure and wise
To be thus lightly mingled with the dust,
And look at earth and sea with clay-built eyes.

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Yea, the poor soul, the sorry charioteer,
By wings uplifted, by desire undone,
Seems to my heart that God dethroned and
dear
Who yet was Lord of the far-shining sun.

Oh, fallen majesty, austere, unseen,
So weak and captive, easy to forget,
My heart gives homage to the Vailèd Queen,
Phoebus among the herds is Phoebus yet.

I who eat porridge from a wooden bowl,
Whilst one dim candle gutters in the gloom,
Do wonder at the greatness of the soul,
And narrow windows of the little room.

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THE FALL

Alas, the twisted evil word.
Under the olives yesterday,
I heard a passing satyr say
Unto the small brown singing bird :
'Oh, fly from these dull garden thieves ;
She who plucks daisies in the wood
Will surely come to nothing good.
There is but greenness in green leaves,
Who seeketh beauty findeth woe,
Down where the fairest flowers are,
Though light on light and star on star
The silver shrinèd lilies grow,

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Though still the ancient Pan abides
And wild winds to the olives tell
The secrets of the oracle,
Whilst through dim glades the moonlight glides,
Till wood nymphs dream themselves divine,
Behind the twisted boughs and gray
The dark god lies in wait alway,
And the earth gapes for Proserpine. . . .'
Oh, they are wise, these woodland things,
Yet this is but a satyr's tale,
Told unto the nightingale,
And birds are conscious of their wings.

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THE GODDESS OF THIS WORLD

Matter exists for the sake of the Form which it contains.—PROCLUS.

QUEEN PROSERPINE, from yonder shining star,
Came long ago to our brown world of clay;
Because of her I keep my door ajar
For every thought or dream that comes my way,
Since to our world of brown
Prosèrpina came down.

Unto her will men say, the giant toil
And little flowers of earth were over dear,
Now does she mix the sunlight with the soil,
And with the dusty clay a shining tear,

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Prosèrpina the Queen
Has made the whole world green.

Queen Aphrodite, rising from the waves,
Finds rose and honeysuckle scents too sweet,
Finds the green grass of earth too full of graves
For the delicate white splendour of her feet—
The skies sprang blue and wide
For Aphrodite's pride.

Once long ago, lost amid dreams and lies,
Queen Pallas wandering held her dreadful shield
Between her and the Wisdom of the Wise,
And thus she lived a few short hours concealed,

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Till at the end of day
From earth she fled away.

May Aphrodite reign in light afar
Where flowers are fairer and the skies more
blue,
And Pallas find a perilous white star
Where all her dreams are true,
But Princess Proserpine
Has made our life divine.

And the green earth is hers, is hers,
The primrose springing from the sod,
Anemones beneath the firs
And laurels know no other god,
Day meekly follows night
For Proserpine's delight.

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ANDROMEDA

Chained to the rock of this sheer world, the Will
Endures the slow wash of the rising tide,
And the cold stars above her far and still
Through the dark secret spheres in silence glide.

Who steals the sacred fire shall be the prey
Of elemental forces; think not thou
To cheat the gods who art not strong as they,
To crown with starry light a mortal brow.

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Yet doth Andromeda, her labour past,
Stand among stars, herself a shining star,
So shall my will burn through the dust at last,
To that far sphere where truth and wisdom are.

Yea, by the magic force miscallèd death,
The vibrant drawing of the inmost light,
The hidden rapture of the failing breath,
The Blessed Vision of the fading sight.

Shall not one storm the gateway of that sphere
Where dwells the soul of our pale twilight skies,
And every austere beauty shines as clear
As Winter starlight on the True and Wise ?

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THE ELM BOUGHS

THE Elm boughs shudder in the sooty wind,
From their bright leaves the City children know
That somewhere the black world is glad and kind,
And through green woods the sunlit breezes blow.

All starved and stunted from the poisoned sod,
They shiver upwards through the stained air;
These are the battered pioneers of God,
Waving His green flag in the city square.

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Thus in the gray-built city of the mind
Wave the green boughs of a few hostage powers,
Their secret whispered to the soilèd wind
Holds all our faith in Beauty's austere flowers.

Somewhere the fair and secret troops of Spring
Shine in strange colours icy clear and cold,
But I pass on through dark streets wandering,
Or dream a dream beneath the elm boughs old.

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THE ARTIST

THE spirit lonely in the spheres of night
Would draw down fire from other worlds and far,
And with a flash of the Diviner Light
Trouble the darkness of this narrow star.

As the young dreaming Christ, with power at play,
Moving among the earth's unsculptured things,
Moulded the crumbling balls of dust and clay
Into the swift delight of swallows' wings,

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So do we gather up the stubborn soil,
Carving weak forms to hold the primal spark,
O God, have mercy on the artist's toil,
Lest the swift flame slip back into the dark,

Unfold the wisdom of those secret rays
That break in violet waves from sphere to sphere,
Piercing our starry nights and sunny days
With the strong rhythm of perilous fires and dear.

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THE SECRET SPRING

'All our fathers were under the cloud.'

A TALE that Maximus the Tyrian tells
How Alexander, flushed with warfare, came
To ask a question of the oracles
That speak to dreaming souls in Wisdom's name.

He asked not for the conquest of the world,
Nor craved to know the fortunes of his sword
Should Victory's flaming wings be soon unfurled
Above the rout of the wild Persian horde.

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As one deep sunk in an abyss of thought,
The warrior smiled a dim and gentle smile,
And prayed for wisdom long and vainly sought,
The secret of the sources of the Nile.

Thronèd above the high Egyptian gate
Still doth the unknown goddess radiant pale,
Queen over many waters, brood and wait,
No mortal hand can lift her shining vail.

And no man knows whence comes the magic tide
Of moving water that makes fair our dreams,
Though where hard soil once crumbled, scorched and dried,
The roses nod their heads, the lily gleams.

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Where once the land was waste, the harvest yields
Full measure down of corn and wine and oil,
The Mighty River floods our thirsty fields,
The waves of life soak through the barren soil.

The sacred stream o'erflows her banks of clay,
And who can tell where those great floods arise
That wash the barriers of the soul away
And purify the wisdom of the wise ?

Still we, like that great king of long ago,
Must question idly 'twixt a sigh and smile,
From what deep spring do the bright waters flow—
Where are the hidden sources of the Nile ?

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REALITY

Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward be at one.—SOCRATES.

You think the joy and sorrow passionate
Of human life should be the singer's theme,
And man's old idle dream of love and hate
More real than the proud, fierce, immortal dream.

Not mine the hot desires and scornings proud
That shake the strings of a rose-crownèd lyre,
And all the blood-red passions of the crowd
Setting the singer's heart and brain on fire.

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The secrets of the soul, have they no place
In the earth's heart, and should her children
then
Despise the hand that moulds all beauty's
grace,
And carves a dream out of the lives of men ?

Shall, then, a song of this fair world hold all
The force of life out of the silence grown ?
Nay, Helen held the sons of men in thrall,
But Psyche built among the gods her throne.

Though Helen's beauty ravaged a fair town,
And drenched the songs of men in blood and
tears,
Yet before Psyche did that god bow down
Whose dreams are all the light of flaming
spheres.

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FOREBODINGS

WHATE'ER I touch to-night I spoil,
No rhythm sings, no light burns clear,
My weary fingers blur and soil
The glory of each crystal sphere.

The twilight lingers in the West
And light fades into burning flame,
Yet deep in the Unmanifest
Burns my soul's secret, why she came.

What pale hands, beckoning from afar,
Could bind her delicate fibres white
Round the earth's heart, whilst every star
In heaven shines with a purer light?

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The secret of the sensible world
Smiles out of blue transparent skies,
Deep in the bulb's deep heart lies furled,
Mocks at the wise and the unwise.

This living will of thine and mine
Is stranger and more secret yet
To catch a glimpse of light divine,
And go away and straight forget.

Has, then, the spirit no bright goal
Beyond the radiant opal waves,
That one should mix with dust one's soul
And wander amongst dreams and graves ?

To-night my spirit vails her face
And weeps beyond me lonely tears ;
My heart shrinks back from her embrace
And all the dust within me fears.

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THE DREAMER

All night I stumble through the fields of light,
And chase in dreams the starry rays divine
That shine through soft folds of the robe of night,
Hung like a curtain round a sacred shrine.

When daylight dawns I leave the meadows sweet
And come back to the dark house built of clay,
Over the threshold pass with lagging feet,
Open the shutters and let in the day.

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The gray lit day heavy with griefs and cares,
And many a dull desire and foolish whim,
Leans o'er my shoulder as I spread my wares
On dusty counters and at windows dim.

She gazes at me with her sunken eyes,
That never yet have looked on moonlit flowers,
And amid glaring deeds and noisy cries
Counts out her golden tale of lagging hours.

Over the shrine of life no curtain falls,
All men may enter at the open gate,
The very rats find refuge in her walls—
Her tedious prison walls of love and hate.

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Yet when the twilight vails that dim abode
I bar the door and make the shutters fast,
And hurry down the shadowy western road,
To seek in dreams my starlit home and vast.

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THE SACRED FIRE

(La Main de Dieu—*Rodin*)

Folded about my soul is deep content,
For well I know that every wild deed done
Is shaped by the strong hand that moulds
the event,
The hand that broke the stars and lit the
sun.

I weep not for false hopes and baffling foes,
Our lives are metal welded in the fire,
The earth's cold iron in the furnace glows,
The Forger bends hard facts to his desire.

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The Sacred Fire that is the Forger's will
Flashes in speed about the wings of birds,
And lights the lonely sunset on the hill,
And flames across the world in human words.

That passionate fire and fierce has burnt its way
Down to the innermost abyss of sense,
And shakes the spheres and breaks our towers of clay,
And moulds the struggling shapes that issue thence.

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DEATH

I thought in going to the other world he could not be without a divine call.—PLATO.

AMONGST the daisies on the dewy lawn
The melody, with delicate steps and slow,
Comes radiant forth, from vibrant wood withdrawn
By the strong fibres of the patient bow.

About my heart a broken music clings,
Shut in this prison of senses five, I pray
That the tense fibres of the sobbing strings
May draw my soul from her close cell of clay.

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No fumbling hands can loose the nerves that
bind
That music folded in about my heart,
Thrilling with every breath of haunted wind,
In the far silent deep she dwells apart.

Patient she waits the Player's rhythmic touch,
The skill that draws her from her dark
abode,
In austere joy not fearing over much
The lonely starlight or the open road.

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POWER

The soul who knows herself dreams not of rest,
Brooding in secret o'er her new-found wings,
Having no fear of the Unmanifest,
Safe from the primal nothingness of things.

She breaks her way athwart the inmost fires
And moulds the force of life unto her mind,
Shaping the lightning to her fierce desires,
Shifting the currents of the unseen wind.

The world's six crownèd powers are but her slaves,
Unto the end of time, for good or ill,

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Her rainbow wings beat out in rhythmic
waves
Of fiery aether all her vibrant will.

And men who strive, and cry, and dream they
rule
Are but in very truth the instrument
Of the wise soul, who carves with a sharp
tool,
Sculptor of life and god of the event.

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HEREDITY

THERE is one thing I know
About life, and thought, and art—
That my soul did not grow
Out of my mother's heart.

To the Wise and the Unwise
Life is a secret still,
But my spirit did not arise
Out of my mother's will.

Our dreams are weak and wild,
And nothing is made plain,
But my soul is not the child
Of my mother's brain.

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Behold this muddy star
Knows the laws of mine and thine,
But the soul dwells afar
Child of the Light Divine.

These things I know because
In Life, and Thought, and Art,
The soul obeys strange laws
That break the heart.

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THE CADUCEUS

THOUGH I lie all day on the green hillside,
where the bracken waves and sighs,
And my soul is too happy for dreams, and
my heart too heavy for deeds,
And the song of my rhythmic and idle hours
is a scorn to the wise,
And my hopes float winged in the sunshine
like the fragile sycamore seeds.

As I lie all day where the bracken sighs frond
upon whispering frond,
Watching the way of the wind in the grass
and the blue sky overhead,

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Know this, I am forging out of my will a
strong and delicate wand,
To guide the footsteps that falter and swerve
in the ways of the newly dead.

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The labour of love is the equilibrium of the Universe, and magnetic circles are the strongholds of power.

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MAGNETISM

Matter, at any rate in its relations to other matter at a distance, is an electrical manifestation. . . . and electricity is a state of intrinsic strain in a universal medium.—WHETHAM.

THE mountains tower in snow-built curves austere,
White and eternal peaks of carven mind,
Rather to me are the green grass blades dear,
That wave their delicate curves in the soft wind.

The mountain torrents down their rocky course
Rush with a rainbow riot of foam and strife,

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Nearer to God is the dumb silent force
That burns behind the atoms' whirling life.

The hills are as the Earth's aspiring brow,
Covered with snowy peace and eagles' wings,
Yet do the green fields yield unto the plough
The secret of the buried life of things.

Deep down amid the forces of the soil
Lies hid the path of that electric spark
That rushes forth in flowers to crown our toil,
Yet holds the world together in the dark.

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BEYOND

Because the world's soul looks me through
and through
From every breaking wave and wild bird's
wing,
I trust my own soul, knowing to be true,
Full many a worn-out old discrownèd thing.

Because of those unearthly fires that shine
Beyond Dūneira of the sunset waves,
I know that life is deathless and divine,
And dead men's souls rest never in their
graves.

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Because of twilight over miles of green
And one small fishing vessel sailing far
On through the torment of wild winds unseen
I steer my little boat by a great star.

Because the rose is sweeter after rain,
Because fierce lightning strengthens the weak sod,
I know life flares behind the golden grain,
And ecstasy beyond the thought of God.

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THE NEW RAINBOW

Obscurity being perhaps the matter of every invisible colour.—PLOTINUS.

Of old the rainbow on the water's face
Showed forth to men the divine promise fair,
That no dark flood should quench the golden air,
Nor great wave rob the daisy of her grace.

Now in our souls mysterious rays are shed,
And stranger lightning of the later years
Uplifts our hearts unto the fortressed spheres
Beyond the violet, beyond the red.

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This is the secret of the spirit's wings,
The strong mysterious promises of pain,
The shining of the rainbow after rain,
The strength and surety of eternal things.

Beyond all fires that wither in the west,
Immortal rays of the aetherial arc,
Blaze the world's rapture out across the dark,
The rainbow of the will is manifest.

We that are sense encompassed, put our trust
In light that shines in darkness, the lost will
That hides in dim bulbs of the daffodil,
And raises radiant lilies from the dust.

No man can dream of beauty without light,
The blue lit Adriatic to the blind

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Is but thick darkness and a wandering wind,
And cold death creeping through the shades
of night.

We, worshipping the sunlight, have not
found
The limits of desire in summer's green ;
We pass from lovely forms to light unseen,
That draws forth beauty out of broken
ground.

And find the winds and waves we dreamed
exist
Are but pale pictures on the walls of sense
Of that far throbbing inner life intense—
The Life and Light of the Evangelist.

Eternal light beyond the rainbow's scope
Of coloured fire unseen about us gleams,

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And no dark flood shall quench our golden
dreams,
Nor death's deep waters rob our souls of
hope.

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RADIUM

THE secret of this sensible world of ours
Blazed out for centuries close to human eyes,
Yet hidden from the wise and the unwise,
Folded in twilight, flaming forth in flowers.

For years the labourer drove his heavy cart
O'er treasure buried under the white road,
And amid unseen armies reaped and sowed,
And no man knew the flame in his own heart.

Till the wise dreamer with unflinching toil,
Brake through the narrow walls of sense
and sight,

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And to the dimness of the outer light
Dragged forth the ultimate secret of the soil.

Who thought to find this radiance in the sun,
This hidden glory in the heart of earth,
Deep in the shadow beyond death or birth
Lay hid the treasure of the All-seeing One.

And darkness seemed the end, now mystic light
Enfolds all shadows, surely each wild gleam
That once seemed but the radiance of a dream
Shines from some true star in the spirit's night.

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Thus should one find at last the god who
hides
In every wood, by whose lost light divine
The gods are beautiful and the stars shine,
And the white moon through clouds and
darkness glides.

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UNDINE

The sun draws up all things out of the earth.—THE EMPEROR JULIAN.

THE one light throned beyond the starry spheres
Draws forth the Wise, the True, the Pure, the Just,
From the earth's heart beneath the mounded years
As sunshine draws the flowers from the dust.

Each primal force strives upward to the light,
Among the lily roots there is no rest,

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And every delicate fibre frail and white
Would be in higher beauty manifest.

Down in the earth's heart the deep mining
gnome
Seeks buried treasure under each green hill,
The river nymph is weary of her home,
The sylph would bend the wild winds to her
will.

Who knows the fire spirit's hidden goal,
Or tracks the sylph through thunder-
haunted skies—
But the nymphs toil for an immortal soul,
And men would toil for love if they were
wise.

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SURVIVAL

In the darkness I planted a rose
And it withered and died,
Now a poisonous fungus lives and grows
By the dead rose's side.

Full many an ill weed evil and old
In caves and dungeons thrives,
'Mid poisonous forces manifold
The bitterest life survives.

Out in the fields there's rain and sun
And a rustle of wind-blown wheat,

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There's nought to shrink from and nought
to shun,
The fittest is honey-sweet.

Honey-sweet from the heart of toil
The inner life of flowers,
The scorching sun and the rain-drenched
soil,
The war of living powers.

There is nothing good, there is nothing fair,
Grows in the darkness thick and blind—
Pull down your high walls everywhere,
Let in the sun, let in the wind.

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PEACE

I AM sad with the city's sadness, sick of toil,
Choked with smoke and tumult, weary of noisy mills,
Weaver of twilight hold me close to the brown soil,
Fold round my soul the lofty peace of thy green hills.

The lonely winds of twilight o'er gentle waters glide,
Grown secret with the magic thrill of unseen wings,

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Here doth the soul of the wild land in peace
abide,
And tired hearts find rest from world-old
wanderings.

The great white daisies toss at ease in the
long grass,
I will fling down my soul to rest in this green
glade,
Where amongst waving fronds the silent
angels pass,
And brown hares fawn about their knees
noiseless and unafraid.

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THE WORLD'S THIEF

The light shines on the rich man's feast
From many a flickering brazen lamp,
God set that great star in the East
To guide the footsteps of a tramp.

Each long moon shadow shakes my soul,
And every gust of harsh wind flings
Rich treasure in my wooden bowl,
Beyond the dreams of the three kings.

The dark night is my coverlid,
I steal from God my grassy bed,
And in this beggar's bowl lies hid
The ravished secret of the dead.

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The winds of God I make my own,
My soul was once His starry will,
Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone,
His world is mine for good or ill.

Here on this wide star-haunted waste
I trespass on His lonely grief,
I have no need for fear or haste,
No prison waits for the world's thief.

His rainbow lights to me are dear,
And stolen moonlit forms divine
Shine in my soul's deep waters clear—
With God there is no mine nor thine.

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THE MYSTIC

Your soul has set sail like the returning Odysseus for its native land.—PLOTINUS.

Nay, though green fields are fair
And the fiords are blue,
I need a clearer air,
I need a region new,
Out beyond the Northern Lights
Where the white Polar Day
To herself in silence sings,
Without thought of words or wings
The secret of a hundred nights.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

I shall find there I know
The lost city of my birth,
Innocent white wastes of snow,
A new heaven and a new earth.
Neither lamb, nor calf, nor kid,
In those lonely meadows play,
All things calm and silent are
Underneath the Polar star,
Where all my dreams are hid.

I am sick of wind and tide—
Tired of this rocking boat
Creaking ever as we glide
Into the white waste remote,
Out there no sound is heard
Save the icebergs' crash and grind,
No human voice e'er shuddered through
The realms of white, the realms of blue,
Nor cry of a sea bird.

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Lying at ease in the dark ship
I watched the last pale night depart,
I dreamt I saw blue shadows slip
O'er the white snowfields in my heart;
And the world had grown so wide
There was room for all mankind—
The icebergs round about the Pole
Crashed in the silence of my soul,
And hemmed me in on every side.

In that crowded world of white
There are many joys unknown,
Without colour there is light,
Loneliness for the alone,
Heedless stars that blaze and shine,
O'er the world's untrodden edge,
You come with me you who dare
Leave the cart and the plough-share,
For the white horizon line.

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Over many seas we sail
Passing many peopled shores,
Like the Greek in the old tale
Homeward sailing from the wars.
Gentle voices bid us rest
From green isle or barren sedge,
'In our world all things are new,
We have passed away from you,
You must seek another guest.'

Voices of enchanted time
Call to us to leave our ships,
Hyacinths of honeyed rhyme
Float from Aphrodite's lips,
We for Circe born unkind,
All the songs the sirens sing
Seem but idly to oppress
Hearts in love with loneliness,
Sails that flutter in the wind.

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O'er the wide cold wastes serene
Rise the walls of wandering white,
Circles of strange gods unseen
In the electric arc unite.
Arctic faces flash and glide,
Glimmers many a flaming wing,
Where the aether strains to hold
The hard heart of the Manifold
All the greater gods abide.

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IMMORTALITIES

Again a voiceless statue is Apollo, and Daphne a shrub bewailed in fable.—GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

Now do men say that though the gods be
fair
Phœbus who moulded beauty into rhyme
And Irish Niamh of the wind-blown hair
Are but the children not the lords of time.

It is not true, still does Apollo hide
In little songs the world's great mysteries,
And the white beckoning hands of Niamh
guide
The hero-hearted over pathless seas.

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My secret treasure-house beyond the grave
Holds but the stars of heaven, the gods of Greece,
And some faint echo of the voice of Maeve,
And the One Voice that is the Eternal Peace.

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THE TRIUMPH OF MAEVE

A ROMANCE

NOVEMBER 1902

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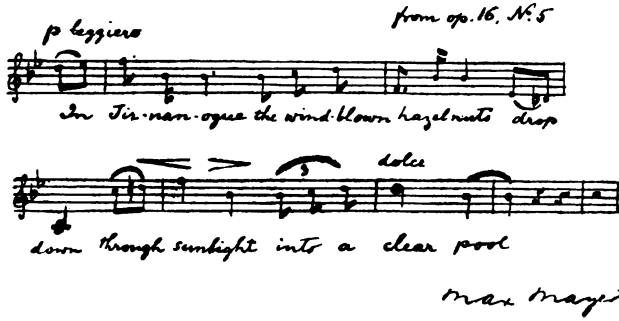

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I HAVE seen Maeve of the Battles wandering
over the hill,
And I know that the deed that is in my
heart is her deed,
And my soul is blown about by the wild
wind of her will,
For always the living must follow whither
the dead would lead—
I have seen Maeve of the Battles wandering
over the hill.

I would dream a dream at twilight of ease
and beauty and peace—
A dream of light on the mountains, and
calm on the restless sea ;
A dream of the gentle days of the world
when battle shall cease

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And the things that are in hatred and wrath
no longer shall be.
I would dream a dream at twilight of ease
and beauty and peace.

The foamless waves are falling soft on the
sands of Lissadil
And the world is wrapped in quiet and a
floating dream of gray ;
But the wild winds of the twilight blow
straight from the haunted hill
And the stars come out of the darkness and
shine over Knocknarea—
I have seen Maeve of the Battles wandering
over the hill.

There is no rest for the soul that has seen
the wild eyes of Maeve ;

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No rest for the heart once caught in the net
of her yellow hair—
No quiet for the fallen wind, no peace for
the broken wave ;
Rising and falling, falling and rising with
soft sounds everywhere,
There is no rest for the soul that has seen
the wild eyes of Maeve.

I have seen Maeve of the Battles wandering
over the hill
And I know that the deed that is in my
heart is her deed ;
And my soul is blown about by the wild
winds of her will,
For always the living must follow whither
the dead would lead—
I have seen Maeve of the Battles wandering
over the hill.

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PERSONS

MAEVE, *High-Queen of Connaught.*

FIONAVAR, *her daughter—a girl of sixteen.*

FLEEAS, *Queen of the Granaradians—a tributary Queen.*

HEROES *and* WARRIOR WOMEN *of Connaught.*

NERA, *a Harper in Maeve's Court who has been a year in Faery Land.*

FERGUS, *Chief of the Ultonian exiles.*

ULTONIAN EXILES: *Men who have left the service of the High-King Conchobar of Ulla, because of the treachery practised on the sons of Usna, and the sorrows of Deirdre.*

AN OLD WOMAN.

A DRUIDESS.

A BLIND MAN.

A LAME MAN.

NERA'S FAERY LOVE.

A SPIRIT *who was Deirdre, and other Spirits.*

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A large hall in MAEVE'S *palace at Cruhane. The room is thronged by the heroes and warrior women of Connaught.* MAEVE *sits on a high throne a little apart. She is dressed in a heavy golden robe with a gold crown on her head. She has a sword at her side, and is surrounded by a bodyguard of warrior women. The Ultonian exiles crowd together at one end of the room. Near them,* FLEEAS, *Queen of the Granaradians, is sitting on a raised seat not as high as* MAEVE'S *throne. Some of the warriors are drinking out of golden vessels and some of them are playing chess in the background.* MEAVE *is a beautiful woman with a long pale*

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face and a mass of reddish-gold hair. She seems absorbed in profound and gloomy thought. FERGUS *is standing near the window, looking out into the darkness. The door opens and* FIONAVAR *comes in.*

It is the night of Samhain (November Eve) when the door of the Magic Cave of Cruhane opened, and the inhabitants of unknown spheres were free to haunt the lonely hillsides and meadows of Connaught.

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ACT I

FERGUS

The night is dark and Orchil's dreadful hosts
Wander the world, the moon is on the wane.

FLEEAS

Men say a company of evil ghosts
Camp round the magic cavern of Cruhane.

FERGUS

I saw nought save a dim star in the west.

FIONAVAR

As I came down the valley after dark,
The little golden dagger at my breast
Flashed into fire lit by a sudden spark ;

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I saw the lights flame on the haunted hill,
My soul was blown about by a strange wind.
Though the green fir trees rose up stark and still
Against the sky, yet in my haunted mind
They bent and swayed before a magic storm :
A wave of darkness thundered through the sky
And drowned the world. . . .

FERGUS

Saw you no monstrous form,
No green-clad host of warriors rushing by,
None of the Sidhe * women, oh Fionavar ?

FIONAVAR

I would have given my helmet and my crown
For the soft shining of a single star,

* Pronounced 'Shee,' the magic people who haunted the raths and forts of the West of Ireland.

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But darkness hung about me, held me down,
Though on the hillside burnt the mystic
gleam
I saw the light yet saw not by the light,
For, self absorbèd in a magic stream,
It shed no rays out on the starless night.
A wizard fire and strange, and yet no fear
Entered my soul, but longing and fierce
pain.

MAEVE

I would the queen's house were not built so
near
The Hill of the Sidhe. . . .

FIONAVAR

Yea, 'twas but last Samhain
That Nera left us, he who ever heard
At twilight, Druid voices calling him ;

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To-night without a cry, without a word
The twilight fell about us, silver dim.
I would that I were Nera. . . .

FERGUS

Say not so,
Little thou knowest, oh Princess, of the Sidhe,
And the dull measure of his sleepless woe
Is but a faery tale to such as thee.

MAEVE (*suddenly*)

Fergus, dost thou remember Deirdre ?*
Deirdre of the Prophecies. . . .

[*There is a silence and the wind begins to moan round the fort.*

* The story of Deirdre, the Harper's daughter, was the principal story of the Red Branch cycle. She was a beautiful woman, foster child to the King Conchobar, who loved her and murdered her lover Naisi out of jealousy. This treacherous deed caused, eventually, the destruction of the Red Branch brotherhood. Deirdre was also famous for her wisdom and prophetic powers.

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FERGUS

Oh Maeve!
For her the blue sky has grown dull and gray
And the wind sighs and every breaking wave
Cries out her name.

MAEVE

Sing now the song
That thou didst make in the forgotten days
Of thy great sorrow, and Deirdre's wrong.

FERGUS

I will not sing that song for gold or praise
Of the Queens of the World. . . .

AN ULTONIAN

Will the Queen give gold?
Then will I sing a little song I made
When we left Ulla in the days of old.

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MAEVE

I will give thee a sword with a sharp blade
For thy song, Fergus. . . .

AN ULTONIAN

Sing, oh Fergus, sing,
And may thy song be heard in the far hall
Of Emain Macha where the treacherous king
Has hung his golden armour on the wall.

[FERGUS *sings the exiles' lament for Deirdre.*

SONG

FERGUS

I hear the wise woman weeping, weeping
for her lost dream,
And the bitter wars of the world and the
cry of a broken wave

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Near the wounded heart of the earth, where
the buried lightnings gleam,
I have seen the flaming opal burn dull in
her grief-haunted cave.

I hear the waves' dim crying as they fall on
the soft sea sand,
And the silver fires grow pale in heaven and
the wind sighs ;
I hear the wise woman sighing over the
desolate land
And the deeds and the dreams of men, of
men who are not wise.

I will leave Ulla for ever, and follow the
wars of Maeve
For the Harper's daughter is dead and life
is of little worth,

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Through my soul there rings for ever the
cry of a breaking wave,
Dark grows the flaming opal in the broken
heart of the earth.

MAEVE

Yet wouldst thou bring a new war on the
world ?

FERGUS

Yea, but the wave sighs breaking on the
shore
And the wind moans, by stormy spirits
hurled
Into the fiery elemental war—

MAEVE

I am weary of war and the world's tears
And the cry of the sea and the wind's sighs,

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I would I were beyond these crowded years
At rest with Deirdre of the Prophecies.

FERGUS

Art thou so weary, yet thy soul is young.

MAEVE

They who are weary change not nor grow old,
By them the sorrows of the world are sung,
Their weariness is as a harp of gold
That the wind plays on, every little wind
Of the old world is playing on my heart. . . .

[*The door opens and* NERA *comes in. He is laden with spring flowers, primroses and golden fern.*

Oh, I am weary of the dreams of the blind,
The loves that fail and the joys that depart
Like the white fading foam on faery streams

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That the stars mock from far eternal skies,
Oh, I am weary of my many dreams. . . .

NERA

Shall not one little dream make the world wise ?

[*He offers her primroses, which she twists in her hair, then he flings down his flowers in a shining mass at her feet.*

NERA'S SONG

I bring you all my dreams, oh golden Maeve,
There are no dreams in all the world like these
The dreams of Spring, the golden fronds that wave
In faery land beneath dark forest trees—
I bring you all my dreams.

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I bring you all my dreams, Fionavar,
From that dim land where every dream is
sweet,
I have brought you a little shining star,
I strew my primroses beneath your feet,
I bring you all my dreams.

I bring you all my dreams, your swords are
sharp
Ready for battle, yet you smile and say—
Here is the dreamer with his foolish harp,
Now shall he wile an idle hour away,
I bring you all my dreams.

FIONAVAR

Why didst thou linger in the faery dun,
Of that strange hosting wert thou not
afraid ?

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NERA

Shall I not wander under the white moon
Whilst in my soul the moonlight does not fade ?

MAEVE

Lo, far from here the moon shines on the sea,
Crowning the waves with silver as they break.

NERA

I have been false to a woman of the Sidhe,
I have forsaken the moonlight for thy sake.

MAEVE

What wouldst thou with me ?

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NERA (*aside to* MAEVE)

Lo, thou shalt dare
Beyond all daring, joy and love and fame,
Stand where the spheres part, face the two-fold glare
And quench the Outer in the Inner Flame.

FERGUS

These flowers at Samhain are an evil sight,
As if old Winter's wiles had robbed the May,
For Autumn roses and pale fires at night
Wandering, lead the foolish world astray.

NERA (*dreamily*)

I have seen roses growing at Samhain
In the enchanted gardens of the Sidhe,

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The stars that shine above the magic plain
Roam as they will and every flower is free,
I have seen roses growing at Samhain. . . .

FERGUS

Each flower should have its season and its time,
Thus every changing month is doubly dear.

NERA

Oh Queen! the faery flowers are free to climb
At their own wandering will up the steep year.

MAEVE

The gardens of the Sidhe must be more fair
Than any land I conquered in old days.

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NERA

Yea, there is neither law nor hatred there,
But all things live at peace for their own praise.

MAEVE

I would that land were mine, for I have won
Praise with the sword and now am growing old.
Men tell of ancient wars and great deeds done
Yet I rejoice not, and my heart is cold.

NERA

Thou hast stormed the world with a sword, oh Maeve,
And bent the dreams of the earth to thy will,

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Yet close to thy fort is the haunted cave
And a star shines over the faery hill
Free as the foam on a breaking wave.

Fearless of thee are the dreams of the dead,
The shadowless host know thee not for their
Queen,
Before thee the dreams of the world have
shed
Their golden petals and branches of green,
Yet what are they to the dreams of the dead.

On a primrose bank thou shalt build thy
throne,
In the Hill of the Sidhe where the great
dreams dwell
They have carved thy name on a Druid
stone

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And thy gold crown lies in a haunted well
On the Hill of the Sidhe thou shalt build
thy throne.

MAEVE

Alas! I am weary of building thrones.

NERA

Out there the kingdom waits for thee, oh
Maeve.

MÁEVE

I hear men sighing with most bitter moans
I have heard the cry of a breaking wave
I weep for the sad world.

NERA

Heed not these things
Heed but the laughter of a magic stream

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And the glad song outshaken from swift
wings.
The sorrow of the world is but a dream—
All winter I have seen the Spring's desire
Bloom in the magic gardens of the wise,
Shall not these primroses, pale flames of
fire,
Light up the joy that slumbers in thine
eyes—
Maeve of the Battles, Queen of Dreams and
Fire.

MAEVE

A gold crown hidden in a haunted well!
Strange are thy words, oh Nera, and weighed
down
With many heavy meanings.

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AN ULTONIAN

He could not tell
A primrose garland from a golden crown!

ANOTHER ULTONIAN

I like not songs like these, the dreaming Queen
Is fooled by every bard that walks the land.

ANOTHER ULTONIAN

Were I the King, this folly had not been,
I would put down the bards with a strong hand.

[*A murmur among* MAEVE'S *followers.*

FLEEAS

Friend, thou art surely mad or drunk with wine,
And thy distemper makes thee over bold—

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NERA (*to* MAEVE)

Oh Queen! I bid thee conquer what is thine,
A crown of primroses, or bronze, or gold.

MAEVE

This is the world's most desolate enterprise.

NERA

Men follow wandering fires of love and hate
And lonely is the labour of the wise,
The dreams of all the world are desolate.

MAEVE

Nay, I have many friends.

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NERA

The dreaming sea
Has many waves, yet is it none the less
Lonely.

FLEEAS

There are none here who would not die for thee !

MAEVE

Friends, underneath the blue eternal skies
Of that green land where the free stars look down :
In the midst of a haunted well there lies
A crown of primroses, the magic crown
Of the Sidhe people, guarded night and day
By monstrous warriors. Life lightly hurled
Into the abyss were a small price to pay
For perilous lordship in that unseen world.

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I would go forth among those shadowless
ones,
Groping through wind and fire from height
to height,
Daring to climb beyond all stars and suns
To join the Inner and the Outer Light.
Yea, I will tear aside the world old Vail.
Friends, will ye follow me if I go forth
To do this deed ?

[*The* ULTONIANS *murmur together.*

FERGUS

'Tis but a faery tale
A woman's dream, the heroes of the North
Would smile at such a fancy. . . .

AN ULTONIAN

Yea, it seems
The crown she dreams of is not even gold !

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MAEVE

Oh Fergus, mockest thou at women's dreams ?
Thus didst thou smile when Deirdre foretold
The fall of Ulla, now the patient years
Hang ivy on the ruins of her pride.
Hast thou forgotten all thy bitter tears,
The woe of the world when Usna's children
died ?
Hast thou forgotten Deirdre, art thou blind
That thou canst dream that wisdom dwells
with scorn ?
So winter sunshine fades on the cold wind,
And the snow lies not on a summer morn ;
Thus has thy wisdom vanished !

FERGUS

Nay fair Maeve
The wisdom of the world is mine to bow

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To an evil fate, yet ere men heap my grave
My star shall triumph, and though I serve
thee now,
Being a man, I shall rule in the end.
Let it not grieve thee that I being a man
Am greater, for no warrior soul could bend
To a woman's rule since the world began. . .

[*There is a deep murmur of anger among the warriors of* MAEVE's *body-guard. They press round* FERGUS. *The* ULTONIANS *crowd together.*

FLEEAS (*to* FERGUS)

There is an end of patience in my soul :
Lo, I have suffered thee for many days
Thus creeping underground like a blind mole
Among the worms, and finding nought to
praise

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In the blue sky above thee, the great Queen
Who gave thee life and shelter in her host
And saved thee with her sword, else hadst
thou been
No man at all, but a poor whining ghost
Slain by the Red Branch in some obscure feud.
Behold the Queen asks but a small reward
For her great deeds, and a light gratitude
Of silence, and the service of thy sword,
And this were well for thee. . . .

FERGUS

Yet would I not obey
A woman. . . .

FLEEAS (*to* MAEVE)

Oh Queen, my fierce sword burns my hand,
Red hot for battle. . . .

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NERA

Ah, be not led astray
By such an idle deed, in faery land
The wars of the vain world are put to scorn,
The wind sighs low o'er many a reedy pool,
And sweet sounds wander through the shaken corn,
And no man stays to battle with a fool.

MAEVE

Put up thy sword, oh Fleeas, little worth
Thy loyal rage is his wild threatening,
Who trusts no man nor woman on the earth
Save the Red Branch and his thrice treacherous King.

[*The* ULTONIANS *murmur.*

FLEEAS

Wilt thou let him go free? . . .

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MAEVE

Free as the air.

FLEEAS

A year ago thou wouldst have struck him down
With the sword. . . .

MAEVE

Nay, friends, I have done my share
Of foolish deeds and won a fierce renown,
Now I have dreamed a dream and the sword gleams
Idle in my hand—let him go free,
Some day he will build the city of his dreams,
I go to conquer mine.

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FLEEAS

My grief that such as he
Should build a city.

MAEVE

By the Gods it is willed
That foolish men should dream a dream of pride
And wrath, yea, and that every man should build
The city of his dreams. The world is wide
For such as thee, oh Fergus, go thy ways.

FERGUS

Nay, Queen, I did but question in my heart,
Drive me not forth after so many days
In this great host, I am loath to depart.

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MAEVE

So be it, Fergus, have thou thy desire.

[*She turns from him to the people of Connaught.*

Friends, will ye follow me to distant lands,
To storm the city of the magic fire
And wrest the throne of the world from ghostly hands?

[*She stands beside her throne. Her gold robe and crown glitter in the torch-light.*

FLEEAS

Thou art the bright star of my dreams, I came
To this dark world that I might follow thee.

AN OLD WARRIOR

I will follow thee as smoke follows flame—

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A WARRIOR

And I as the little waves of the sea
Follow the moon's will high in heaven above—

A WOMAN WARRIOR

Lo, I will serve thee as men serve for gold.

ANOTHER WARRIOR

And I as a lover following his love
Through the length and breadth of Eirinn, as of old
Finn followed Grania.

A WOMAN WARRIOR

Lo, like a dreamer seeking for his dream
I will go with thee even to the world's edge,

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Where moonlight withers and pale waters
gleam
And the wind whispers through the faded
sedge.

CHORUS OF WARRIORS

Yea, we will follow thee unto the end,
Seeking thy smile as flowers seek the sun.

MAEVE (*moving forward with outstretched arms*)

Ye shall go with me as friend goes with
friend,
Thus in all freedom shall this deed be done.

[*The people of Connaught cry out 'Eirinn for Maeve—Maeve of the Battles.' The* ULTONIANS *join in the cry.* MAEVE *signs to them—there is a hush.*

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MAEVE

To arms, to arms, ye who would do my will. [*The trumpets sound.*

NERA

I have no sword, yet would I follow thee.

[MAEVE *signs to an attendant, who brings her a sword. She offers it to* NERA. *He takes it and lays his harp at her feet.*

NERA

Fairer than starlight on the magic hill
Is thy white sword, Queen of the Western Sidhe.

MAEVE

Be thy soul armed against wind and flame
And all the magic wars of faery land.

[*She takes the harp in her hands lovingly and winds round its strings a*

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wreath of primroses. She lays it on the gold-embroidered cushion of her throne.

NERA (*gazing earnestly at* MAEVE)

Beautiful as a song is thy great name,
Fairer than the gold harp is thy white hand
As thou art more than music, for thy sake,
Oh Maeve, I have cast all my dreams aside. . . .

MAEVE

Take back thy dreams, let not thy heart break
For a lost song and one vain hour of pride.

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NERA

Nay, I will follow thee, Maeve of the Bright Hair.

[*He kisses her hand, and stands on one side.* MAEVE *begins to descend the steps of her throne.* FIONAVAR *rushes forward impetuously.*

MAEVE

What wouldst thou, beautiful Fionavar ?

FIONAVAR

I would go with thee, I would have my share
Of thy great deeds, and when the songs are sung
My name shall be with thine as our hearts beat
Together. . . .

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MAEVE (*sadly*)

I fear for thee, thou art young—

FIONAVAR

Oh Maeve, my youth lies there before thy feet,
Tread not thou down this glory of bright days
Into dull ashes.

MAEVE

I will quench no fire
Nor set my foot on any love or praise,
Yet is my heart now like a broken lyre,
Have thou thy will. . . .

[*The warriors cry out again 'Eirinn for Maeve—Maeve of the Battles.' They divide themselves into two lines, leaving a space between.*

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NERA

Mourn not, oh golden Maeve,
Happy are they who for thy sake are slain
Though they lie songless in the cold grave.

[*The trumpets sound again and* MAEVE *passes down the room between the lines of warriors, who salute her as she goes. She is followed by* FLEEAS *and* FIONAVAR. *The warriors and attendants form themselves into a procession and go out after her.* NERA *is left alone. The music dies away in the distance. He has the sword in his hand, which he holds clumsily, and gazes round him disconsolately.*

NERA

Alas! I would I had my harp again.

[*He goes out slowly after the others as the scene closes.*

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ACT II

A grassy bank covered with primroses by the side of a well. In the background, on the gentle slope of a hill, is the magic cave of Cruhane. The ivory gates at the cave's mouth are wide open, and the cave is full of light. On every side an enchanted forest stretches into the distance. Leaning against the gate are the guardians of the well. One of them is blind, the other lame.

THE BLIND MAN

I hear a low sound as of falling leaves
In the dim wood, or else a little wind

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Stirs in the fern and shakes the yellow
sheaves
Of rustling corn. I would I were not blind—

THE LAME MAN

Nay, I see nothing—

THE BLIND MAN

If I had thy sight
I would see more than thou—

THE LAME MAN

There's naught to see,
Come friend we should be back ere night
In the King's Hall.

[*They stumble away together and disappear in the cave.* MAEVE *comes in followed by* NERA. *She is in her battle-dress, a golden helmet on her*

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head, dented by many blows. She has a heavy sword in her hand. She looks round and sinks down wearily on the bank.

MAEVE

I heard the fading voice of the Sidhe.
Play to me, Nera, for my soul has need
Of music.

NERA

Alas ! I cast my harp aside
At Rath Cruhane.

MAEVE

That was an idle deed.

NERA

A vain deed vainly done, the songs abide
Deep in my heart and cry about my soul

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Seeking in vain for the sweet answering cry
Of the three strings.

[NERA'S *Faery Love comes in from the cave at the back. She is dressed from head to foot in a long purple robe. She goes up to the well.*

FAERY

Alas ! for the thief who stole
My golden harp, under the rain-haunted sky
Of Eire he shall sing Danaan songs :
Alas the shining dreams that fade and cease,
Oh ! magic water, heal my many wrongs
And wrap my soul about in songless peace.

[*She leans over the well drinking the water, which she scoops up in the hollow of her hands.*

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NERA

She drinks the waters of the faery pool
And dreams thus to find solace for her grief,
And by their potent magic to make cool
Her burning heart.

FAERY

Oh, like a fallen leaf
That no green spring with living sap renews
Is my dead soul—in vain and all in vain
Are faery waters and flower-dazzling dews.
Oh ! Nera, give me back my harp again.

[*She goes out, mournfully wringing her hands.*

MAEVE

Who is this woman ?

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NERA

Nay, I do not know,
Some faery dreamer who dreamed of the earth
As we might dream of a star, and found woe
And gave her harp away for a mortal's mirth.

MAEVE

Did he not love her ?

NERA

Yea, for a little while.

MAEVE

The dream of conquest withers in my heart,
I would go back to the world where lovers smile—

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NERA

Is the land not fair that thou wouldest
depart ?
Thou hast not even seen the faery host.

MAEVE

What is thy faery host to me ? I have seen
The sorrows of faery land !

NERA

Let not the thin drawn ghost
And shadow of grief pull at thy heart-strings,
Queen,
This was no sorrowing girl, but a pale shade
Mourning an unreal woe with fickle breath
To turn thee from thy purpose, a trick
played

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Or a dream dreamed by the lords of life and death
For our undoing.

MAEVE

These same lords
Are strong to bend the whole world to their will,
They bind our souls about with mighty cords.

NERA

Yet is the soul free on this wind-swept hill
From the bonds of fate.

MAEVE

Nay, I cannot tell.
A load of grief about my spirit lies,

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I would drink of the waters of the magic well,
The magic waters bring dreams to the wise.

NERA

Drink then, oh Queen, and dream of faery springs
That fill the long grass with soft shining sounds
Most musical, struck from the silver strings
Of the world's harp, streams that flow underground
Tunnelling the hard earth with a buried song.

[MAEVE *drinks the water. She falls immediately into a deep sleep, lying on the grass propped against the stonework of the well.* NERA'S *Faery*

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Love comes to the edge of the wood and beckons to him. They wander away together among the trees. The air is full of the thin and melodious voices of spirits who flit past on their way back to faery land.

FIRST SPIRIT

This is the woman who drank from the well.

SECOND SPIRIT

Oh, she is of the bright immortal throng.

FIRST SPIRIT

Through her weak hands the enchanted waters fell.
I heard them fall.

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SECOND SPIRIT

Yet is she not as fair
As any spirit ?

THIRD SPIRIT

She is mortal born.
I hear the west wind rustling through her hair,
Her heavy human hair, like waving corn
That shivers in the breeze, also she sighs
In her sleep, as the wind sighs in the reeds.

FIRST SPIRIT

We will watch her dreams.

SECOND SPIRIT

Yea, for men grow wise
In sleep and their dreams are greater than
their deeds.

[*A very glorious spirit pauses in her flight, and spreading out great wings*

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floats down to the ground and stands among the primroses by the side of MAEVE.

SPIRIT

What wouldst thou, Maeve, why dost thou
come here
With a sword ?

MAEVE

Lo ! I have dreamed magic dreams
Of conquest and a gold crown to be won,
And a sharp sword that in the moonlight
gleams.

SPIRIT

Here shall no deed of violence be done,
No crown be won or heart pierced with the
sword,

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Here all the battles of the world must cease,
And a white shining peace is the soul's reward.
Why dost thou come here troubling our white peace ?

MAEVE

I am but the leader of a great host.

SPIRIT

No host can enter into this pure land,
But every desolate and lonely ghost
Finds shelter here. The sword in the warrior's hand
Is turned against his heart, and the dream in his eyes

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Has led his soul astray—unto his battle car
The gates are shut for ever.

MAEVE

Spirit most wise,
Fairer than any dream, or flower, or star,
Who art thou ?

SPIRIT

I am she who was called
Deirdre !

MAEVE

Oh Beauty like a venomous white flame
That wasted Ulla !

SPIRIT

Shrink not thou appalled
From my great sorrow. Beauty knows no
shame

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For the wild dreams and hollow deeds of fate.
Nay, what was I but a glass the gods held up
To the souls of men grown fierce with love and hate—
For the drunkard's deed blam'st thou the golden cup
That held the wine—or the emblazoned page
For the wars chronicled—or the mirror's face
For the dark world of evil deeds and rage
Reflected there ?

MAEVE

Oh Queen ! thou art the grace
And glory of the world, Beauty the passionate Rose
And mystic flower of life, and the dull wars of earth

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Flow from thee even as a river flows
Down from the sunlit hills where dreams
have birth.

DEIRDRE

I dream no dream of war, ere light burns
gray
In the world the hosts that follow thy wild
will
Shall wither like dead leaves and fall away
Blasted by magic of the inviolate hill.

MAEVE

Queen of the storm-built citadel of dreams
And all the radiant kingdoms of the wind—
Hast thou forgotten how the sword gleams
In the world, and put the old days out of
mind ?

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DEIRDRE

I have seen many wars and hard deeds done—
And now live peaceful days of glad intent
Yet Naisi pines for the light of the sun
He wields no dream sword in his banishment
As I do joyfully, a peaceful sword,
Sharp edged with dreams and as a flame of fire
Deep in the soul of many a fierce warlord,
That burns away, oh Queen, thy heart's desire
And flames in the breast of young Fionavar,
Dividing many spirits from their peace.
And this my sword is as a fiery star

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Shining at evening when all battles cease.
I go to Naisi, he sits sullen-eyed
With folded wings and dreams still of the wars
Of the world and the Red Branch and his lost pride. [DEIRDRE *goes away sighing.*

MAEVE

May thy star guide his soul to peaceful shores.

DEIRDRE

May a great lonely peace abide with thee.

[*The spirit of* DEIRDRE *vanishes. There is a short silence broken only by the beat and rustling of many wings. Gradually this sound dies away in the distance and all is still. The guardians of the well come out of the cave.*

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THE LAME MAN

I see their white spears shining in the glen
Where green boughs toss like an unquiet sea,
I hear the tramping of a thousand men.

THE BLIND MAN

Lo ! 'tis the army of world-conquering Maeve.
Let us make fast the gates with bolt and bar
Against the fury of the flowing wave.

THE LAME MAN

Oh ! dost thou see the young Fionavar
Smile at the people from her car of state
With a fierce smile ? Men call her the Fair-browed—

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THE BLIND MAN

Bar up the gate, oh friend, bar up the gate.

THE LAME MAN

Like a tall flower she sways above the crowd,
And there is Fleeas of the wild will,
And Fergus, and strange warriors of the north.
Come, we will bar the gate—in the faery hill
There shall be peace.

[THE BLIND *and* THE LAME MEN *go together into the cave. The gates shut behind them with a loud and ominous clang.* NERA *and his Faery Love come out of the wood.* MAEVE *is still asleep. There is a sudden dimness behind the ivory gates.*

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FAERY

Oh Nera ! go not forth
Into the world again. There is a hard frost
In the world, the sky is dull and gray
As the gray shuddering willows tempest tossed,
Or the pale years that melt like smoke away
Over dim meadows.

NERA

Yet should I not mourn
For the brown pools and purple wastes and hills
Of Eire and the blue sea and rustling corn,
Are they not more to me than many ills—
What wilt thou give me fairer than these things ?

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FAERY

I gave thee my harp, what wouldest thou more ?
Is there not moonlight in the silver strings,
And the wind and the waves sighing on the shore ?

NERA

Even as my love so do my dreams increase :
I have dreamed of a great sword that overcame
The world.

FAERY

I have nought to give thee but peace. . . .

NERA

My soul is wrapped about in warring flame.

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FAERY

Alas! the gate is shut, it is too late—
The way is barred against us—we are exiled
From all our dreams—

NERA

This is the deed of fate.
I will go back to earth and, like a child
Of faery land, make music of my heart's desire
And sing sweet songs and find rest by Maeve's fireside.

FAERY

I have no place by any mortal fire.

NERA

Nay, say not so, beloved, the world is wide
For wandering, and these ivory doors

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Shall stand open unto all souls again
In a year's time.

FAERY

Oh, many weary wars
Shall be in the world, and many heroes slain
Ere I go back to the land of my delight—
Alas! Alas!

[FLEEAS *comes in followed by* FIONAVAR *and attendants.*

FLEEAS (*in a loud voice*)

Where is the High-Queen Maeve?

FAERY

Behold your Queen!

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FLEEAS

Alas ! oh Maeve, the host reels back with
fright
Crying for their leader.

NERA

Lo ! she has drunk
Of the well water—doubtless she has seen
A shining vision—spirits talked with her
But now. . . .
See how she smiles, her head has sunk
Among the primroses, long grasses stir
About her quiet fingers.

FLEEAS

She left the host
In secret, panic has taken her place,
And while she communes idly with a ghost
Leads us to dire confusion and disgrace.

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MAEVE (*waking*)

What heavy news, oh Fleeas, dost thou tell?

NERA

The sword has broken in the hero's hand.

FLEEAS

There's mutiny in the host.

MAEVE

It is well.
I would go lonely into faery land.

FAERY

Alas! Alas! thou canst not enter there
Though thou art Queen and leader of this war
And men tell of thy great deeds everywhere.

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MAEVE

I am a beggar at the ivory door
Bereft of deeds.

FAERY

Alas! the door is barred. . . .

MAEVE (*fiercely springing to her feet*)

No door is barred against the High Queen.

[*She goes up to the gate and tries to open it.*

Sound the trumpets, call the Queen's guard,
Fleeas!

[FLEEAS *signs to an attendant who sounds the trumpet three times. There is a long silence.*

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FLEEAS

Alas! they dare not set foot on the green
Of the haunted hill.

MAEVE (*storming*)

Cowards and Knaves!
Now will I rouse my soul from dreams, I swear
By the oath of my people many new-made graves
Shall witness of this hour, ye do not dare
To face a spirit's wrath—is there rage like mine
Think ye in faery land—oh! ye have found
Safety—I will pour out your blood like wine
At a banquet, ye shall seek sunlight underground

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And find joy sailing in a sinking ship
And mercy in the lightning, pray the storm
To shelter you, and fire to cool a fevered lip,
Yea, with an icicle make your hearts warm
Ere ye win pity from my outraged soul.
Oh ! Nera, where is then the golden crown
Of thy vain story ? Is this the end and goal
Of all thy dreams ?

NERA

There is peace for thee beyond the gates.

MAEVE

Cease the soft flowing of thy honeyed tongue
Made sweet with many lies, my sick soul hates
Thy flattery—Now shall no song be sung,
But every bard accursed for thy sake.

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Nera, the dreamer, whose songs broke the heart
Of a Queen that the World's wars could not break.

NERA

Cease thou thy railing, I will depart
Oh terrible Queen, alas, my songs
Have broken my own spirit.

FLEEAS

This is no time
For words, the host has broken up in separate throngs,
And evil thoughts are ripening into crime
In a blaze of flaming fear. . . .

MAEVE

Ye faithful ones speed with swift feet
Down to the valley where these warriors hide,

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And bid them ponder in their safe retreat
The words ye have heard on the mountain side.

[FLEEAS, FIONAVAR *and attendants go out*, NERA *lingers*.

MAEVE

Farewell, I will not see thy face again
Nor shall thy voice drop poison in my mind.

NERA

Yet shalt thou hear my tears fall in the rain,
And my sad spirit cry along the wind,
My homeless spirit knock at the shut doors
Of thy proud soul. Bend low thy passionate brow

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Oh Queen, thou hast not conquered grief in
thy wars.
Thou shalt be lonely as I am lonely now,
Exiled as I am exiled, thou shalt weep
As I have wept for thee. . . .

MAEVE (*listening intently*)

I heard a little dreamy din,
A pebble fall into the abyss of sleep,
A sudden noise as if one moved within
With stealthy steps. . . .

NERA

Thou hast broken my life,
Oh Queen, as a brand is broken for the fire.

MAEVE

Why dost thou vex my soul with this vain
strife ?

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NERA

I have given thee my dreams and my golden
lyre.

MAEVE

I have given thee a sword.

NERA

A sorrowful gift.

MAEVE

Yea, sorrowful as any lying tale
Fashioned with empty longings to uplift
The burden of grief when all our false dreams
fail.

NERA

These are not gracious gifts, take back thy
sword.

[*He flings the sword down on the grass.*

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MAEVE

There is some one singing. . . .

NERA

She hears me not,
I served her with my soul for this reward.

MAEVE (*breathlessly*)

A gracious melody.

NERA

This is their lot
Who serve a Queen's will.

MAEVE

Such gentle sounds
Flow in soft waves past the coarse gates of sense
Nor deign to enter.

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NERA

Oh, this doth pass the bounds
Of patience—This is the end—I will go hence,
Yet will I drench her sweet name with my tears
Once more — farewell, Maeve, beautiful friend..

MAEVE

Alas! why dost thou trouble my tired ears. . . .

NERA

Oh Maeve, must I leave thee thus, is this the end
Of all my joy and love?

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MAEVE

Why wilt thou tease
My soul with memories, such joys are past
For me, I have seen fairer things than these,
And a new song holds my spirit fast.
Open the gates, oh ye of faery birth,
To a poor spirit desolate and alone.

NERA (*going out*)

I will go back to the cold earth
Where my harp lies near an empty throne,
And silence reigns from door to golden door,
And pale winds blow from the unquiet sea
Over Rath Cruhane, bringing news of war.

[*He goes out.* MAEVE *sinks down on the ground with a cry.*

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MAEVE

Oh wilt thou not open the gate to me
Deirdre ?

[*A light flickers and vanishes behind the ivory gate, and the hillside begins to grow dark as the scene closes.*

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ACT III

SCENE I

Interior of a tent in MAEVE'S *camp at midnight.* FLEEAS *comes in.*

FIONAVAR

Hast thou been the rounds, is all well in the
camp,
Dost thou bring news?

FLEEAS

Nay, the long hours creep
Onward in silence, in vain the signal lamp

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Burns o'er the Western gate, and all men
sleep,
Save the slow guard who pace with measured
tread
To stir their watch fires, no other sound is
there.

FIONAVAR

Oh, is she among the living or the dead
Thinkest thou Fleeas. . . .

FLEEAS

Everywhere
I feel the bitter winds of her desire.

FIONAVAR

The dead are ever near. . . .

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FLEEAS

Nay, they are pent
In the bodiless æther, as the fire
Is prisoned in the opal . . . what strange
event
Has changed thy fierce soul to a timid dove
Trembling with fear?

FIONAVAR.

How can I be brave?
Great fear is hidden in the heart of love.
Surely some evil has befallen Maeve.

FLEEAS

She dreamed, doubtless, she saw a radiant
sight.
Should there be any terror in these things?

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FIONAVAR

Yea, there is terror in the haunted night,
And fear for every spirit with frail wings,
Breasting a storm.

FLEEAS

She is strong to stand
Against all the storms of all the worlds that toil
About the heavens, and even in faery land
The grass grows greener when she treads the soil.
She spreads her wings to every wind that blows,
Beyond the tempest seeking the calm goal
Of her desire, the peace her spirit knows
In dreams, the waveless harbour of the soul.

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FIONAVAR

How many a weak ship with mighty sails
Driven before the wind, founders at last
Amongst the reefs and shoals—What dream avails
To quench the lightning or hold the storm fast. . . .

FLEEAS

Yet, throned above all these, the gods are kind,
And great sails bear a little vessel far—
Blessed are they that trust the homeless wind.

[MAEVE *comes in. Her face is pale and her eyes luminous.*

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MAEVE

I have come down from the hill, Fionavar—
Fleeas, thy good words smite me to the heart,
I have found no kingdom, but a grievous war.

FLEEAS

Oh Maeve, the host are ready to depart.

MAEVE

Didst thou not say they follow me no more?

FLEEAS

They will do thy will without murmuring,
Save Fergus only!

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MAEVE

It is very well :
I would go forth against the Red Branch King,
I think it is not Fergus who will rebel
Against this deed.

FLEEAS

The King Ailill *
Sends messengers, he waits thee at Cruhane.
He fears for thy safety on the faery hill,
He is old, he would look on thy face again
Once ere he dies.

MAEVE

He whines his life away,
He is not old, it is not he who will die.

* Ailill was Maeve's husband, who is said to have fought in her army at times, but often remained in Connaught when she went out to battle.

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Fleeas, true friend, as soon as it is day
We will hold a council, the midnight sky,
With its mysterious stars and cloudy fires,
Is but an ill deviser of sharp schemes
To rule the world, and this long watching tires
The soul that sees the beckoning hands of dreams
Wave through the starlight—go thou to thy rest.

FLEEAS

My rest is in thy love.

MAEVE

Then hast thou found peace.

FLEEAS

May all the secret ways of sleep be blest
To thee, oh Queen, and daylight sorrows cease. [FLEEAS *goes out.*

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FIONAVAR

Oh Mother, what didst thou see on the hill,
Why dost thou follow hotly this new strife ?

MAEVE

I saw lost dreams and a defeated will,
I saw the ivory shut gates of life.

FIONAVAR

Yet why wilt thou go forth against the
Lord
Of Ulla, thou who art weary of war ?

MAEVE

Deirdre must be avenged. . . .

FIONAVAR

Can any sword
Avenge Deirdre ?

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MAEVE

Yea, the sword evermore
Must answer treachery. My lips would scorn
To speak the traitor's name, yet this sharp blade
Shall know his heart. . . .

FIONAVAR

Oh Mother, thou wert born
Under a fierce star, I am almost afraid
Of thy wild words. . . .

MAEVE

Think well ere thou goest forth
With me to battle, this is no child's play ;
There are many mighty heroes in the North.

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FIONAVAR

I dreamed that thou didst see Deirdre
Among the Danaan people, is it not so?

MAEVE

She would not open the ivory gate.

FIONAVAR

She will open to thee the gates of woe,
She it is who has brought thee to this fate
Alas, she has brought much sorrow on the earth.

MAEVE

All great souls bring great sorrow : in past years
There was a woman of Danaan birth
Who brought grief to faery land, and many tears. [NERA *passes outside singing.*

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SONG

In a dream of opal and cloudy blue,
The starlight gives rainbow wings to the wind;
The stars toss their flaming crowns to the dew—
Silent, oh Queen, is the dew on the grass. . . .
Behold, I have given my dreams to the blind,
And my shining songs to the shadows that pass
Dumb as the dewdrops and deaf as the wind.

The moonlight has given a soul to the sky
With white rays into the darkness shed;
But the voice of the wind is a bitter cry,
Listen, oh Queen, to the voice of the wind. . .
My harp is broken, the music has fled,

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Behold I have given my dreams to the
blind,
Behold I have given my love to the dead.

FIONAVAR

Oh Maeve, go not thou forth to do this
deed.

MAEVE

What fearest thou ?

FIONAVAR

There is enough blood shed,
My soul is broken like a windblown reed
Crushed down beneath the footsteps of the
dead. . . .
I have seen Feithleen *—

* Feithleen was a mysterious prophetess of the people of Connaught.

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MAEVE

Think not to frighten me,
I dream no dream of sunshine and sweet
flowers,
I have talked with the ever blessed Sidhe,
I have seen many sorrows and dark hours.

FIONAVAR

Like little flames of fire, short tufts of hair
Waved round her brow and many times she
cried
To me, she said there was blood everywhere
About the host.

MAEVE

Doubtless she prophesied
The fall of Ulla, the death of Conchobar.

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FIONAVAR

Her face was white and hollow like a ghost,
As she stood beside me on the chariot bar ;
She pointed with wild hands towards the host
And babbled of blood and many griefs to come ;
Red everywhere, blood red. I have never seen
So much bloodshed ; lo, Queen, I was stricken dumb
With terror, I fear greatly for the end,
I fear for all our lives.

MAEVE

I that am Queen
Have seen much blood shed, and many a friend

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Fall dead at my feet, I have no fear.
Think thou no more of all these childish
tales,
Take courage.

FIONAVAR

Oh Mother, thy life is dear
To me, I am not brave, no courage avails
To bring the dead to life.

MAEVE

Foolishness
And empty terrors are these dreams of
thine.

FIONAVAR

Seest thou not how, lit by the fiery stress
Of love, lights in the darkness shine
Of the time to come. . . .

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MAEVE

Who stands on the threshold ?

[FERGUS *comes in.*

FERGUS

I have been the rounds, all's well, be not afraid.

MAEVE

Come hither, friend, I promised thee of old
A goodly gift, a sword with a sharp blade.
For thy song, Fergus, take now thy reward,
Here are sharp swords to avenge Deirdre's wrong,
And in the host is many another sword.

FERGUS

This is a great gift for a little song.

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MAEVE

To-morrow we go forth against Conchobar.*

FERGUS

Oh Queen, thy glory is as the white moon,
That shines in heaven beyond every star;
Till all the spears flash in the warrior's dun—
And round the hero's brow burns the fierce light
Of mighty deeds.

[NERA *is heard singing outside.*

The moonlight has given a soul to the sky
With white rays into the darkness shed,
But the voice of the wind is a bitter cry—
Listen, oh Queen, to the voice of the wind. . . .

* Conchobar, the King of Ulla, who treacherously murdered Naisi, the lover of Deirdre and comrade of Fergus.

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FERGUS

I thank thee from my heart,
Great Queen, for the promise of this moonlit night.

[*He kisses her hand and goes out.* FIONAVAR *takes the torch which has burnt low and extinguishes it, trampling it under her feet.*

FIONAVAR

Alas, alas, the moonlight shall depart
From the world—the night is lonely and dark.

MAEVE

Nay, thou art foolish, why now dost thou weep?

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FIONAVAR

The torch is dead now, and each little spark
Quenched. . . .

MAEVE

Surely thou art weary, thou hast need of sleep,
Go now and rest.

[NERA *sings outside.*

My harp is broken, the music has fled;
Behold I have given my dreams to the blind,
Behold I have given my songs to the dead,
My songs and my love and my soul to the dead.

[*The song dies away in the distance.*
MAEVE *goes to the door and looks out.*
The room is flooded with moonlight.

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MAEVE

The world is fair as any warrior's dream,
Bathed in white moonlight luminous and clear,
Still here and there the sullen watch-fires gleam.

FIONAVAR

My heart is heavy with an unknown fear.

[*She goes over to* MAEVE. *They stand together looking out. The scene closes.*

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ACT III

SCENE II

Interior of a tent, through which a little stream runs. A DRUIDESS *is crouching in the shadow gazing into the dark water. The tent is hung with magical symbols, triangles and other mathematical figures. There is a bronze lamp on a high pedestal, under it is a huge opalescent shell. A yew bough is hung over the entrance.* MAEVE *flings aside the curtain and comes in. She looks fierce and haggard—in her hand is a javelin. The* DRUIDESS *does not move or look up, but goes on crooning to herself and gazing into the stream.*

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DRUIDESS

Oh, wandering water fallen from thy rest,
Among the hills in many secret streams,
What dream dost thou bear away to the West,
Where the Atlantic waits for all our dreams ?

Thy creeping footsteps fill the night with sound
And silence, gliding through the windless tent
Still as deep waters that flow underground,
Dark with the vision of a fierçe event.

Like children struggling on the breast of night,
The image of the slayer and the slain

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Float past in trembling waves of broken
light
With running water for their battle plain.

Oh, Mannanān,* call all thy streams to thee,
Be thy voice heard above the silvery din
Till restless rivers find the untroubled sea
And every little wave is gathered in.

MAEVE

Druidess !

DRUIDESS

What is thy will ?

MAEVE

I have come here
Straight from the battle, I would know the
end.

* Mannanān was the sea-god.

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DRUIDESS

The end is peace.

MAEVE

Speak plainly friend, no fear
Is in my soul. Plain words do but offend
The timid. What dost thou see in the
stream ?

DRUIDESS

A victory such as the poets sing
And the unbroken triumph of a dream.

MAEVE

I would break the pride of the Red Branch
King.

DRUIDESS

Deirdre shall be avenged.

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MAEVE

Is it even so ?
Why dost thou tremble, Druidess, and turn
pale ?

DRUIDESS

I have seen another sight, a vision of woe.

MAEVE

A false dream surely ; shall this great host
fail ?

DRUIDESS

I have seen the bearers carrying the dead.

MAEVE

All men must die ; the battle hours hold
A short and painless death. . . .

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DRUIDESS

Oh, so much bloodshed
Has dulled the vision. . . .

MAEVE

Thy tale is but half told,
What seest thou ?

DRUIDESS

Oh, Maeve hold thou thy shield
Before the breast of her thou lovest most,
See to her safety on the battle-field.
May the kind gods who march beside the host
Protect her.

MAEVE (*with a loud cry*)

Fionavar ! Fionavar !

[FIONAVAR *pushes aside the curtain and comes in.*

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FIONAVAR

What wouldst thou, Maeve? I wait here
for thy will.

MAEVE

Fleeas goes with me in the battle car,
Go thou to thy tent. . . .

FIONAVAR

What have I done?

MAEVE (*speaking quickly in great agitation*)

Naught, be still.
The omens are evil, go thou to thy tent.
Wait there in peace, the battle is not for
thee
To-day; have pity, child, my soul is rent
With fear.

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DRUIDESS

It is the will of the ever-blessed Sidhe.

[*A sudden echoing cry is heard. The* DRUIDESS *puts her ear to the shell and listens intently. The tent grows dark.*

MAEVE

Fionavar, where art thou ?

FIONAVAR

At thy side. . . .

MAEVE

A cold hand touched me. . . .

FIONAVAR

Waves of chilling air

Darken the world. . . .

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MAEVE

The crowding shadows glide
About us. . . .

[*There is a flash of lightning. For a moment glimmering faces are seen as of a host of spirits rushing through the tent. There is a slight earthquake shock.*

FIONAVAR (*absently gazing into the darkness*)

The faces of the gods are very fair,
The earth rocks underneath their scornful tread.

[*Through the dark tent there rushes a shining spear made of living and fluid particles of light. There is a hissing sound as of red-hot iron plunged into water, and the spear vanishes.*

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A VOICE (*wailing*)

Ioldana, why hast thou hurled thy spear *
Into the world ?

ANOTHER VOICE

The living and the dead
Have met in the crashing of a broken sphere.

FIRST VOICE

The lance should have lain among lifeless things
Made drowsy with poppies steeped in Mandragore. [*A flight of white birds passes.*

A VOICE

Red is the blood on thy birds' wings,
Angus !

* The living spear of the god Ioldana had tremendous magic powers. Angus was the god of love.

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A VOICE

There is one here I know not.

ANOTHER VOICE (*shrieking*)

A God of War,
A new and terrible god. . . .

A VOICE

Oh, stranger Lord,
Bid the spheres part and all this tumult cease. . . .

ANOTHER VOICE

Thy soul has come amongst us like a sword . . .
Leave us in peace—leave us in peace.

[*The thunder grows louder and louder. There is a violent earthquake shock.*

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FIRST VOICE

Pass on thy way, bid the struck earth be still.
What have we to do with thee, pass on thy way.

A VOICE (*in terror*)

Thou hast put out the sun with thy wild will.

A SHRIEKING CRY

Where is the sunshine, give us back the day!

[*The earthquake shock is repeated. The tent becomes darker and darker till suddenly a little circle of light begins to grow in the midst of the blackness. Figures gradually become visible, very small and clear like a vision in a crystal ball. Three crosses stand out*

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for a moment against a lurid sky surrounded by a confused and panic-stricken multitude, then there is another earthquake crash and everything disappears in the darkness for a short time. Crash succeeds crash and all is confusion. Then the light gradually and very dimly re-appears. FIONAVAR *is lying on the ground in a dead faint.* MAEVE *stands beside her pale and rigid.*

DRUIDESS

Oh ! Mannanān, call all thy streams to thee,
Be thy voice heard above their silvery din
Till restless rivers find the untroubled sea
And every little wave be lost therein.

[FIONAVAR *gradually comes to herself.*

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MAEVE

The gods have given a sign—the ground shook
And sank beneath us like a sinking wave,
I have read of such things in an ancient book.

FIONAVAR (*in a voice of passionate entreaty*)

May the gods pity a tortured slave!

MAEVE

Alas! alas! my soul is full of fear
And evil boding.

DRUIDESS

Hast thou no pity then
For the death of a god? Oh Queen, the crystal sphere
Is broken and a new star gone forth. . . .

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ACT IV

MAEVE'S *tent. It is growing dark.* FIONAVAR *and an* OLD WOMAN. *The* OLD WOMAN *is spinning.*

FIONAVAR

Old mother, dost think they will soon return ?

THE OLD WOMAN

Have patience, child, the day is not yet done.

FIONAVAR

See, in the distance, dost thou not discern
Their helmets flashing in the setting sun ?

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THE OLD WOMAN

'Tis but the river glittering on the plain.
Young eyes are dazzled by a dream of strife
In every stream.

FIONAVAR (*impatiently*)

I strain my eyes in vain.
This is the longest day in my whole life.

[*She paces about impatiently. The* OLD WOMAN *spins. A* MESSENGER *enters the tent. He is dusty and travel-stained.*

MESSENGER

The battle is over—the Ultonians fled.
I have seen Cuculain fly before the Queen,
He saved himself by flight—now he is dead
And Ulla has fallen.

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FIONAVAR

I would I had seen
The triumph of Maeve!

MESSENGER

Lady, even now
She stands victorious in her battle-car
Lonely among the dead. Grief is on her brow—
She speaks but of thee, Princess Fionavar.

FIONAVAR

I will go forth to meet her.

THE OLD WOMAN

Nay, child, rest
A little while.

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FIONAVAR

I cannot rest, my heart
Does not know peace. The sun is in the west,
I must see her ere the last gleams depart
From the world.

THE OLD WOMAN

Oh! I am old and feeble grown;
I pray thee wait awhile.

FIONAVAR

I cannot stay.

THE OLD WOMAN

Wilt thou leave me mourning here alone?

FIONAVAR

I must be with her ere the close of day.

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THE OLD WOMAN

Oh! wild and passionate will, ye shall not
meet
Before the daylight deepens into night.

FIONAVAR

Yet will I run to find her with swift feet
Chasing the last rays of the fading light.

THE OLD WOMAN

Ah, do not go, a sharp and shuddering chill
Warns all my soul against this deed of thine.

FIONAVAR

My heart is on fire, and my mortal will
Is but a wine-cup for the spirit's wine
That overflows in deeds.

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THE OLD WOMAN

Oh, rash and reckless one !
The Queen feared much for thee this battle plain.

FIONAVAR

I will be with her there ere set of sun,
The battle is over and all her fears in vain—
I go to find the sweet and shining hour
I have seen mirrored in each running stream
And in the heart of every wind-blown flower,
I go to find the glory of a dream—
The triumph of Maeve !

[*She goes out. The* OLD WOMAN *begins to spin and sing to herself in a low voice.*

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SONG

Out of the depths of the crystal spheres
To the wind-blown world a spirit came,
And from the joy of her shining years
She brought but a little waving flame.

The winds of the world blew strong to scorch
With the burning dream her crystal mind.
Alas, for the spirit that held the torch!
Alas, for a flame blown by the wind!

Alas, for the wild desire that stole
From the opal's heart the spark divine,
For the flame has burnt through her inmost soul
And cracked and blackened its crystal shrine.

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MESSENGER

Does any evil thing threaten the Queen ?

THE OLD WOMAN

She will find her lonely amongst the dead.

MESSENGER

That was a strange song, surely thou hast seen
A vision or dreamed some dark dream of dread.

THE OLD WOMAN

The flame has cracked and scorched its crystal shrine. . . .

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MESSENGER

Cease thou thy riddles, who may understand
These twisted dreams and subtle words of thine?
Speak thou the common speech of all the land.

THE OLD WOMAN

There is no need for words, it is too late—

MESSENGER

Dost thou see anything?

THE OLD WOMAN

On the grass outside
I hear the swift foot-fall of fate,
I know that she will find what she sought.

[*Another* MESSENGER *comes in.*

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SECOND MESSENGER

Where is the Princess Fionavar?

THE OLD WOMAN

She has gone forth to meet the High-Queen
Maeve.

SECOND MESSENGER

The Queen drives homeward in her battle-
car,
Crushing the grass where many a new-made
grave
Shall soon be heaped, she bids the Princess
stay
Her coming here, her soul is strangely rent
With evil dreams and bodings. Canst thou
say
Where I shall find the Princess?

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THE OLD WOMAN (*goes to the door and points*)

This way she went.

SECOND MESSENGER

How shall I know her, lady ; by what signs ?

THE OLD WOMAN

She is young and tall, like a tall meadow flower
Delicate wristed with a sword that shines
Guiltless of blood. Stay, in an evil hour
She bound the golden cath-barr on her head
That marks for all the world her royal birth.

SECOND MESSENGER

I would know her among the living or the dead
By the gold circle of the kings of earth.

[*He goes out.*

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FIRST MESSENGER

What dost thou fear, why is thy soul down-
cast ?

THE OLD WOMAN

She has gone out into a world of woe
At twilight.

FIRST MESSENGER

Surely all danger is past.

THE OLD WOMAN

Danger is never past while rivers flow
Down to the sea, and white spring flowers
fade
In the sharp winds, while every weary year
Autumn makes barren the green forest
glade,
Thinking these thoughts my heart is full of
fear.

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FIRST MESSENGER

These are the foolish fancies of the old,
Their dreams are ever but a craven throng
Of fears, their hearts beat slow—their blood
is cold.

THE OLD WOMAN

Oh ! spirit of youth, thou doest the world
wrong,
The sunny April world where old and new,
The aged earth and the young growing
flowers
Are lit by rainbow dreams the whole day
through ;
But the pale primrose haunted twilight hours
Gazing at old unfathomable things,
Crowd round the threshold of the nearer
stars
And beat the blue air with their weary wings—

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Believe me, the old behind their prison bars
Have lit strange altar fires.

FIRST MESSENGER

I hear the sound
Of galloping horses.

THE OLD WOMAN

It is the Queen!
Grief is on me, I am bowed to the ground,
I would that all this sorrow had not been.

[*There is a moment's silence — then* MAEVE *comes in.*

MAEVE

Where is Fionavar?

THE OLD WOMAN

Oh! great Queen, blame me not
For I am old.

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MAEVE

Where is Fionavar ?

THE OLD WOMAN

I know not. She fled like an arrow shot
Into the twilight, gray, without a star,
I am old and feeble, and my sight is weak.

MAEVE

Oh fool, fool, fool, why didst thou let her go ?

THE OLD WOMAN

There was her dream that she went forth to seek.

MAEVE

She has found the gates of the world's woe
And flung them wide for me to enter in.

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Did I not leave her young life to thy care?
Oh! she was better in the fury and din
Of battle, there is no safety anywhere.
Old woman, hast thou then no words to say?

THE OLD WOMAN

I thought I heard music.

MAEVE

Who are these
Who sing such strange songs? They pass
on their way
In slow procession winding through the trees.

[*The* OLD WOMAN *goes to the door and looks out.*

THE OLD WOMAN

It is the bearers carrying the dead,
A warrior lying on a golden shield.

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MAEVE

Alas, the vision—there was much blood shed
Not hers. I kept her from the battle-field,
I kept her from the sight of my sad eyes—
I could not keep her from my dreams.

[*The* DRUIDESS *comes in.*

DRUIDESS

She died
On the battle-field.

MAEVE

Oh thou most wise
Canst thou not save her.

DRUIDESS

Nay, the dead abide.

[*A procession of warriors comes slowly into the tent, chanting as they go. They*

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are carrying the dead FIONAVAR *on a long oval shield.*

LAMENT

She is rescued from days and hours, she is lost to the years that pass,
And the broken pride of her beauty shall lie near the roots of the grass.

In vain dost thou seek to restore her, oh Queen, she was weary of war,
Let us bear her away to the peace of the lonely and dream-trodden shore.

Far away near the haunted Rosses where the sea shrinks out of the bay
And the world is a purple shadow from the green lands to Knocknarea,

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Where the sky is above and about us and
the sand crumbles under our tread,
And a rain-soft wind from the hills shall
soothe the tired eyelids of the dead,

We will fold her round with our pity, we
will lay her down in her grave,
Fionavar, fairest of women, the daughter of
yellow-haired Maeve.

Oh Mother! how shall we remember, how
shall we bear her in mind—
A spent lamp lost in the darkness or a flame
that went forth on the wind.

Is she broken and silent and gone like the
broken string of a lyre,
Or radiant, a child of the lightning, a spirit
of music and fire?

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Did she mock at the growing flowers, think
scorn of the spring in her pride?
Though the guardian hills stood dreaming
about her she would not abide.

The rain and the wind were her comrades,
she left them, she went forth alone;
Now the rainbow's circle is broken, the
dreams of the wind overthrown.

She forsook the kind hearth of the world
and the sweetness of things that are,
To build up the pride of her soul on some
lonely and perilous star.

She is hidden away from the twilight, her
secret is known to none,
She has broken her faith with the wind and
the sea—she is false to the sun.

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AN OLD MAN (*on the outskirts of the crowd*)

My sight is dim—why do these idle folk
Crowd round the Queen, what evil has come
to pass ?—

A WARRIOR

Men say the great heart of the Princess
broke
For pity of the dead lying on the grass
After the battle.

MAEVE

Ye who have borne her hither on her shield
Tell now your tale, how did this thing befall
Fionavar ?

A WARRIOR

She came at evening, running to the field
Knowing naught of battle, or sights that
appal

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The strongest soul unused to the ways of war.
Thou knowest her heart was ever wont to
burn
For any little grief—therefore when she saw
The primroses all soaked in blood and the
brown fern
Broken—Death that was servant to no gentle
God
And everywhere pale faces wild with pain,
The blood-stained daisy cried out from the
sod
Unto her soul, there on the stricken plain
For very pity she fell down and died.

NERA

Should a man die for pity of those who die
I weep for the immortals patient eyed
And pale fixed stars that weary of the sky.

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MAEVE

Oh ye who saw her fall, ye must have heard
Her idlest whisper, her last sobbing breath.
Did ye not rescue one half-drownèd word
From the black tides and silent gulfs of death?

WARRIOR

She shrieked—a bitter cry.

MAEVE

Is there then none of you
Will tell me the words of her whose swift end
Has broken my heart? [*There is a silence.*

MAEVE

Unfaithful and untrue!
Are you all slaves, have I not then one friend?

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FLEEAS

She flung her arms out to the blue and cried,
'Is this the triumph of Maeve' and shrieked
and fell,
And lay so still, none knew when she died.
Oh Queen! this is a grievous tale to tell.

MAEVE

Yea, and a grievous triumph.

[FERGUS *comes in.*

FERGUS

Queen, I am loath to bring
Noises of battle to this quiet tent
Where all men mourn, and only the bards
sing
Praises of the dead.

[MAEVE *rises to her feet and motions to the attendants, who go out one by one.*

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MAEVE

What sudden event
Has brought thee here, what dark and evil
fate?

FERGUS

There are strange tidings from the fortressed
hills,
The captains sit in council, and they wait
Thy presence and crowning will.

MAEVE (*gazing at* FIONAVAR)

Oh, least of many ills
Is death. Child, thou wert wise beyond thy
years.

FERGUS

The jealous captains wait for thee, oh
Queen,
This is no time for mourning or for tears.

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MAEVE (*still looking at* FIONAVAR)

I will go with thee.

FERGUS

'Twere well thou wert seen
In the camp, for men say the Queen is dead.

[MAEVE *rises slowly and goes towards the door.*

MAEVE

I come.

FERGUS

They have cast covetous eyes on the throne.

MAEVE

Alas! Alas! shall there be more blood shed?

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FERGUS

Pity them not, they reap as they have sown,
The host is murmuring like a troubled sea,
Speak them soft words, and bid this tumult
cease.

MAEVE

Pass on.

[FERGUS *goes out.* MAEVE *stands for a moment near the door as if about to follow him. Suddenly she stops, drops the curtain and rushes back to where* FIONAVAR *is lying. She flings herself on her knees beside her.*

MAEVE

Oh, wilt thou not open the gates to me ?
Fionavar, Deirdre, the gates of Peace.

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ACT V

Great Hall at Rath Cruhane as in Act I. *A feast is spread on gold and silver dishes, everything is prepared for* MAEVE'S *home-coming. The* DRUIDESS *is surrounded by a group of warriors and attendants talking eagerly.*

A WARRIOR

Men say there is a great and evil change
In the High-Queen since Fionavar died.

ANOTHER

Yet she is not old, it is very strange. . . .

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ANOTHER

She stands entranced for hours, vacant eyed,
Speaking to none. It is as if a spell
Had fallen upon her, she does not hear
The voices of the world, no man can tell
Whither her soul strays. . . .

DRUIDESS

She mourns perchance
Fionavar or Ailill.

WARRIOR

Nay, men say
This is no sorrow, but a Druid trance
That dulls her sense and wraps her soul away.
For her lips murmur many a strange word
Unknown to dreams, as in the battle-song
A sudden rush of strange desire is heard

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That shudders away beyond the straining
throng
In a moment. . . .

DRUIDESS

It is not often in the time
Of their great victory that the stars call
To the souls of men, yet the golden chime
And thunderous procession of the spheres,
In waves of music hiding the wise dead,
Sweeps through her soul and breaks the web
of years
That muffles the will, reverberant to the tread
Of Dreams. . . .

WARRIOR

Surely the Queen's heart is dead and cold,
Once she had many lovers, now no man
May please her, men say she is growing old.

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DRUIDESS

She had grown old before the world began.

WARRIOR

Strange such a woman should tire of delight.

ANOTHER

Is it to-day that she divides the spoil ?

ATTENDANT

As I looked out across the plain last night,
I saw great carts laden with precious things,
And heavy burdened oxen strain and toil
Along the Eastern road.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT

Doubtless she brings
Great gifts to Connaught.

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ALL

Long may the Queen reign !

[*Singing is heard in the distance.*

Far away in the Curlew mountains, the fires of welcome flare,
For word has gone out through the country that Maeve has come home again.
Men tell of her glorious deeds and her victories everywhere,
And all the idle folk in the land are flocking to Rath Cruhane.

Oh, ye warriors weary of battle ! here is an end of toil,
For the gray-necked crow has fled away with a flapping of bloodstained wings.

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Far from the place of slaughter shall be the dividing of the spoil,
And the bards shall sing of the battles of Maeve in the hall of the Kings.

[*Procession of Dancers, Harp Players, Druids, Druidesses and Warriors.*

[*There is a moment's hush, then* MAEVE *comes in alone. She is dressed in a long gold-embroidered robe, as in Act I., with a gold crown on her head. She moves like one in a dream but goes straight to the throne.*

Now the young tell their dreams to the old and the wise go crowned with flowers ;
Weak spirits shall dwell with heroes, and be comrades of the brave,

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For this is the day of all days in the world,
the hour of hours,
The day of the glory of Connaught, the hour
of the Triumph of Maeve.

MAEVE

I have given the captains orders to divide
The spoil, each warrior shall have his part,
All shall be done in justice without pride
Or fear of men. . . .

FERGUS

Some folly is in her heart.

MAEVE

All souls shall share alike, and be content.

FERGUS

Great gifts befit great names and little men
Are grateful for little.

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A WARRIOR

The host will be rent
With the wrath of princes.

MAEVE

What sayest thou then,
Oh Fleeas? Many who served in the ranks
Who were not heroes or kings yet were slain.

FLEEAS

For this justice thou shalt gain little thanks.

CHORUS OF WARRIORS

The Queen is just. . . . Long may the Queen reign.

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MAEVE (*passionately*)

Let them reign who may, Fionavar
Is dead. [*She sinks down on the throne.*

ATTENDANT

Queen there is one without,
A poor man, he says he has travelled far
To find thee.

MAEVE

Let him in, without doubt
He brings news.

[*There is a stir in the crowd and* CONAL *pushes his way into the hall.*

CONAL

A favour, Queen.

MAEVE

What is thy will ?

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CONAL

Do justice, Lady, between me and mine,
I am blind Conal of Knock Lane Hill.

MAEVE

Say then, oh Conal, what is this boon of thine ?

CONAL

Bid Nera who was my brother, divide
The fields he stole—the beautiful green lands
He wrested from me when our father died.

MAEVE

Couldst thou then hold them with those poor weak hands
Of thine ?

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CONAL

Yea Queen, weak hands are strong to grasp
The sword of justice, and my claim is just.

MAEVE

Have then thy justice, go thy ways, and clasp
To thy cold heart this handful of dry dust.
I know thee of old, thy brother who stole
It from thee is a dreamer, he has no need
Of land; he has much treasure in his soul.

CONAL

He is a man of avarice and greed.

MAEVE

Fergus, see thou that Conal have his share
Of the fields, I have other work to-night.

[*A Voice in the hall.*

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VOICE

Justice, oh Queen! Vengeance on them
that dare
Deceive me, and defraud me of my right.

MAEVE

What is thy right!

A WARRIOR

The love and happiness
Of the beautiful Edane, she who was my
wife.

MAEVE

There is but little right in love, and less
In happiness.

WARRIOR

They have stolen away my life.

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MAEVE

There is no right in life.

WARRIOR

There is the law
That gives each man his own.

MAEVE

Love is not thine,
Or joy my gift to give or to withdraw.
No law can help thee to hold fast these things.

WARRIOR

She fled away with Dary from the North.

MAEVE

In vain dost thou hope to clip the swallow's wings.
Let those who dream of summer freely fort

Digitized by Google

Lest in their bonds they poison the deep
wells of Life.

WARRIOR

I would have vengeance for my ancient
name,
Disgraced and blackened by this deed that
tells
My loss to the world, and mars my fair
fame.

MAEVE

She has gone forth to the world, let the world
deal
With her, fear not, sorrow is at her side
And the world's vengeance sharper than the
steel
Of thy fierce sword, thou shalt be satisfied!

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VOICES

The Queen is just! Long may the Queen reign.

A VOICE

Justice, oh Queen! and blood for blood-shed.

MAEVE

Which of us all is there who has not slain
Another.

[*A pause. An* OLD MAN *pushes to the front.*

OLD MAN

Nay, but my son's blood is red
On the grass: shall not the slayers die?

MAEVE

I have seen pity on a blood-stained field.

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OLD MAN

Men say he cried a very bitter cry.
They bore him home to me dead on his
shield.

MAEVE (*earnestly*)

Oh friend! have pity on the holy dead.

OLD MAN

They have no pity, four warriors can boast
They slew my son, in secret was his blood
shed—
By treachery.

MAEVE

Trouble not his ghost
With this dark folly of revenge, he knows

Digitized by Google

It is well to die, he thinks thee but a fool
Old man, to fill the world with noise and blows
For his sake.

FERGUS

The Queen grows old, she is not fit to rule.

MAEVE

Hush! there is music—

[NERA *is heard singing outside. The great doors at the end of the hall are flung wide open as if by an invisible force, and as* NERA *advances the Guards and Attendants fall back on all sides. He passes up the room and stands before* MAEVE.

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THE WELL OF WISDOM

In the Queen's dun a heavy curtain shuts
The sun out and the air is dark and cool,
In Tirnanogue * the wind-blown hazel nuts
Drop down through sunlight into a clear pool.

And knowledge dwells where the red berries are
And wisdom among the waters cool and bright,
Wherein deep sunken many a drownèd star
Burns with a secret and unearthly light.

Not in the judgment hall shall the Queen find
Wisdom, nor on the breast of warring seas,

* Tirnanogue, the country of the young, the paradise of Irish mythology.

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But in lost waters where a haunted wind
Rustles the green boughs of the hazel trees.

MAEVE

I have taken from thee, oh Nera, thy green lands,
Yet would I give thee for this song great praise.

[NERA *untwines the wreath of primroses from his harp.*

NERA

I have a gift for thee, oh Queen, my hands
Are empty now of gifts, I go my ways.

[*He lays the primrose wreath on the step of* MAEVE'S *throne and turns to go, but the people gather round him with threatening murmurs and angry gestures.*

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A VOICE IN THE CROWD

This is the man who has bewitched the Queen
With words.

ANOTHER VOICE

He made a mighty and a three-fold curse
And put it on her.

ANOTHER VOICE

What do such songs mean
But treason and red murder, yea, far worse
Than all these things, contempt poured on the throne
And sovereign power of Connaught.

FERGUS (*scornfully*)

Let him be,
He's but a fool.

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A VOICE IN THE CROWD

Nay, not of him alone
Judge ye, but of the strife and misery
His dreams will bring on the land.

ANOTHER VOICE

Drive him forth
From Connaught.

ANOTHER VOICE

Nay, vengeance is on his brow,
He will make songs in some dun in the North
And put a curse on us.

ANOTHER VOICE

Yea, let us slay him now.

CONAL

Oh, Nera, give me back those lands of mine
Thou knowest of!

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NERA

Peace, peace, hot-headed one,
Get thee back to thy cattle and thy swine.

MAEVE (*to* NERA)

This is a foolish deed that thou hast done.

NERA

'Tis the last folly and the last farewell !

CONAL

Traitor, give forth thy life for thy false tongue,
Thy life for thy treachery.

NERA

The bards shall tell
This tale in the aftertime, and songs be sung

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How a man slew his brother for lean lands
And scraggy hills, spray-swept by the harsh
sea.

CONAL

Were those green fields a waste of shifting
sands
Yet would I slay thee.

NERA (*drawing his sword*)

Even so, then let it be,
I will give battle unto thy desires
Oh Conal, knowing that this is the end.
Beyond the ivory gate burn starry fires
Where the spheres meet and rushing torrents
blend
With peaceful waters, and each broken wave
Of melody flows on from sphere to sphere.

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CONAL

Nay, thou shalt find but green grass for a grave,
Yea, in the end shall the green grass be dear
To thy proud soul.

[*They fight.* NERA *defends himself languidly, and is soon wounded and overcome.*

FERGUS

He was no fighter, yet shall he have praise
In the aftertime.

CONAL

'Twere well he were slain,
Else will he come back after many days.
Yea, surely he will bewitch the Queen again.

[MAEVE *is sitting on the throne with her head on her hands and her elbows on her knees.*

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NERA

Wilt thou not lift my poor gift from the ground?
See it is stained with blood, oh Proud Queen!

MAEVE

Nera, these magic primroses were found
In the dim wood where hazel boughs are green
Above enchanted waters.

[*She takes the primrose wreath in her hands.* NERA *watches her intently.*

Withered flowers,
Oh blood-stained primroses, ye speak unto my will
With a harsh cry, a burden of bitter hours

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Drowned in blind caverns under the dark hill
Of dreams. . . .

[*She shudders. There is a silence.*

MAEVE

Now has the hour struck that is the last
Of all my hours. The busy moments cease
To vex me, crowding ever thick and fast
Round my sick soul—beyond the gates of peace
I breathe the air of that wide, quiet sea
Where music has changed the rhythm of all things
To the round measure of Eternity,
And ancient time with dark and broken wings
Has sunk beneath the waves—

[*She casts aside her crown and royal robes.*

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Oh! lie thou there thou crown of life and
fate,
Now is my heart for ever and ever free
As the free stars beyond the ivory gate.
For the last time these rags of royalty
Cumber the soul, now will I find the way
To Tirnanogue—the way to my own soul,
The way to the world's heart beyond night
or day
Or love or hate or any golden goal
Of Empire, the inexorable doors
Yield to the passionate rhythms of the wise.
My feet are on the elemental floors,
The fierce ætherial fires dazzle mine eyes.
I did not save thee, Nera, yet will I go
With thee—

[*She winds the wreath of primroses in her hair.*

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FLEEAS

Wilt thou then die with him, oh Maeve ?

MAEVE

Nay, nay, fear not, I know
A better way—the hazel branches wave
And sway in the wind, and gentle voices call
From the deep shadows, voices that once I knew
Of those who stand in peace when the stars fall.
In such a place it seems that my soul grew
Out of the darkness long and long ago
At the world's edge.

NERA

Oh ! I will follow thee
And greet thee where the quiet waters flow
Under green boughs.

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FERGUS

Nay, Queen, this cannot be.
Hast thou forgot thy kingdom and thy throne—
And us who did thy will on the red plain of battle? A king's life is not his own.

MAEVE

It is not given unto kings to reign
For more than a little while—

A CHIEF

Dost thou not know
The royal bonds that bind thy soul to ours
Thy people, from of old—

MAEVE

Long, long ago
My soul lay deep amongst the roots of flowers

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And now, my people wander o'er the hills,
The white-faced daisy and the homeless clan
Of primroses and the most loyal daffodils
Are waiting for me. Since the world began
My soul was bound with many a secret bond
Unto the intimate will of the brown soil
That fought for beauty in green boughs beyond
The wars of men, and with long silent toil
Built up the hills and flowered in the white thorn
And faded in the twilight, and at noon
Lay in thick sunshine on the growing corn
And mixed the gentle magic of the moon
With the soft sighing of the flowing tides
And a dim dream of spirit faces pale
That haunt the woods.

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DRUIDESS

Oh Queen, the glory of the world hides
Much grief.

MAEVE

Nay, nay, the primroses are but a veil—
A rag of beauty hiding immortal brows
From easily daunted eyes.

[MAEVE *goes slowly down the room like one in a dream—nobody dares to stop her.*

NERA

Oh, most wise Queen,
I will greet thee again under the hazel boughs
In Tirnanogue when the hazel trees are green. [MAEVE *does not seem to hear.*

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WARRIOR

Nay, sorcerer, that thou shalt never do.

[*He stabs* NERA *as* MAEVE *goes out. A warrior rushes forward to seize the fallen crown. Others try to hold him back. Another warrior snatches up the sword of* MAEVE—*and the scene closes in confusion and wild disorder.*

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I think also that life is a certain long road leading to Eleusis or Babylon, but that the boundaries of the road are palaces and temples, and the greatest of the mysteries.

MAXIMUS TYRIUS.

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CONTENTS

	PAEG
THE THREE RESURRECTIONS	
I. LAZARUS	3
II. THE RETURN OF ALCESTIS	11
III. PSYCHE IN HADES	16
THE UNKNOWN GOOD	25
POVERTY	27
THE PERILOUS LIGHT	29
NARCISSUS	33
THE HARVEST OF SILENCE	36
ECSTASY	38
THE HUMAN ADVENTURE	39
TRAGEDY	43
A DWELLER BY THE OCEAN	44
THE FALL	48
THE GODDESS OF THIS WORLD	50
ANDROMEDA	53
THE ELM BOUGHS	55

Digitized by Google

	PAGE
THE ARTIST	57
THE SECRET SPRING	59
REALITY	62
FOREBODINGS	64
THE DREAMER	66
THE SACRED FIRE	69
DEATH	71
POWER	73
HEREDITY	75
THE CADUCEUS	77
MAGNETISM	81
BEYOND	83
THE NEW RAINBOW	85
RADIUM	89
UNDINE	92
SURVIVAL	94
PEACE	96
THE WORLD'S THIEF	98
THE MYSTIC	100
IMMORTALITIES	105
THE TRIUMPH OF MAEVE	107

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